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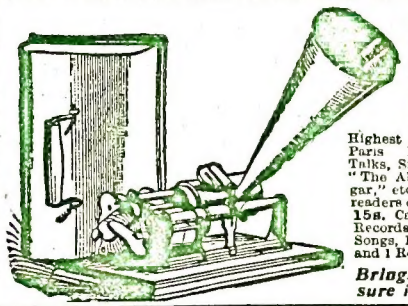

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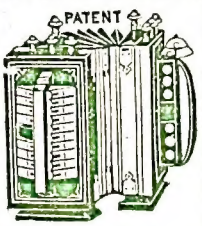

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SHORT STORIES

No. 672.] For the Week Ending November 16th, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

Adventures of an Actress.

At the bottom of her trunk was discovered a green Morocco case containing one set of the famous diamonds.

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THE ADVENTURES OF AN ACTRESS.

XV.—IN THE FELON'S DOCK.

By DONOVAN MART.

CHAPTER I.

A Mysterious Meeting—"They are Worth a Thousand Pounds"—A Fair Cat's-paw.

"It's past the time. Why doesn't he come? Has he begun to break faith?"

It was a man who uttered these words. A well-dressed, handsome fellow, with a silky brown moustache disguising a mouth which, but for the hair that hid it, would have been at once marked by physiognomists as the one weak part in a face otherwise exceptionally well favoured by nature. The man's lips were hard and cruel.

It was in Princes Street, Edinburgh, a thoroughfare famed all the world over for beauty. It was one of those rare mornings in early winter, with a cloudless sky and keen exhilarating atmosphere, a morning to make the blood dance, and even the most pessimistic feel that, after all, life has something worth living for.

The man was standing beneath that graceful Gothic structure, the work of a Scotch peasant boy—the Scott Memorial. His eyes roved impatiently down the busy street and along the handsome line of shops that were lost in the distance in the cool morning mist.

Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder. He wheeled round rapidly, to be confronted by another man, a short, sturdy figure with clean-shaven face, upon which was none of that refinement that lay upon his own countenance.

"Ah, David," said the man who had been first at the *rendezvous*, "you are here at last. I had begun to think that you weren't going to turn up."

"Have you ever known David to break his word!" asked the other curtly, "where you are concerned? I am late because—well, because I couldn't help it. But I've got a lot to tell you though it can't be here. Come along up to the snuggery in the Canongate. We can talk there without fear of being overheard."

The two men at once set off, and walking swiftly past the way to the station, held on up Cockburn Street and into the old town. Walking silently down the Canongate they came to a pause at a public-house just before the Tolbooth, which they entered quickly, and with the air of men who knew their locality well.

The man called David led the way upstairs to a small private room, rather more comfortably furnished than might have been expected from the house and its surroundings.

"Now I daresay you are wondering, Phil," he said, "why I have summoned you here to Edinburgh in such a hurry, but the fact is I am on to a thing that is worth a little trouble, as pretty a little haul as ever a gentleman of our persuasion attempted to lift. In the first place, you have no doubt noticed the posters all over Edinburgh announcing that the *Good Samaritan* Company is engaged to appear at the Royal Lyceum Theatre for one week only?"

Phil gave vent to a quick exclamation of surprise.

"What on earth is your game now?" he said; "and why should the advent of the *Good Samaritan* Company have anything to do with you?"

"Not so fast, Mr. Philip Chesterton," broke in David. "You seem to be mighty flurried all of a sudden. Give me time and I'll tell you all."

"I couldn't help being surprised," answered the other, with a half-laugh; "but the fact is there's a little girl in the company that I'm rather sweet on."

"Now you are not going to tell me," cried David, "that you've been bowled over by the charms of the beautiful Miss Hazel Harlow?"

"No," answered Chesterton with a laugh. "I don't fly quite so high. No, it's a little girl called Millie D'Esterre, who, happens, funnily enough, to be rather fonder of me than I am of her."

"Ah, you good-looking ladykillers!" broke in David. "You never give us poor beggars a chance." Then his voice changed, and his sharp little eyes narrowed themselves into slits.

"It couldn't have been better!" he said, with almost diabolical glee. "It's just the very thing that will be of use to us—this fondness of Millie D'Esterre for handsome Phil Chesterton. It'll mean a thousand pounds in our pockets at least."

"Whatever do you mean?" cried Chesterton in great agitation. "Here, we've had enough of this beating about the bush—what's the game?"

"Since you and I went into partnership, Phil," came the answer, "and turned ourselves into a very limited company for the appropriation of other people's valuables we've had one or two pretty good successes. Well, I must tell you that one of the leading ladies in the *Good Samaritan* Company is a Miss Hetty Morton, a girl who, sometime ago, had the good luck to attract the spendthrift young nobleman the Marquis of Basingford. As an appreciation of the fair Hetty's charms and ability

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the young nobleman, in a fit of generous folly, presented the girl with a necklet of diamonds that had been heirlooms in his family for many a long year. As you can understand, his mother, the Dowager Duchess of Porlock, was nearly off her head with rage to think that the young nobleman could throw such pearls, well, it was just the same as to say, Hetty seemed swine to the old lady. She raved and swore in Duchess-like language, begged and intreated, and even wrote to the girl offering to buy them back at her own figure. But Miss Hetty laughed at her. She'd got the trinkets and she was going to keep them, and kept them she has till this day. Now the reason why I've asked you to join me in Edinburgh so soon after our little *coup* at Buxton, is because I've got my eye on the Porlock diamonds, and having just heard from you that there's a girl in the Company who's sweet on you, well, it strikes me those jewels are as good as got."

Chesterton listened to his confederate with attention.

"That's all very well," he said, "and the trinkets are undoubtedly worth the trying for, but I don't quite see how the fact of Millie D'Esterre being spoons on me is going to help us."

"You're denser than I thought you were," answered the other coolly, lighting a cigarette. "I see I shall have to be more explicit. Could we not, somehow, or could you not get speech with Miss Millie and endeavour to get her to assist us?"

"In other words," broke in Chesterton, "Millie is to lift the jewels?"

"Exactly. But I don't want you to go to her and say: 'Please, Millie, go and steal the Porlock diamonds.' In the first place, does the girl know all about you—about all your antecedents, and where you come from, and that you are—well, at home, Mr. Philip, and abroad a gentleman cracksman—to put it bluntly."

Chesterton laughed.

"I'm not quite such a fool as I look, David. To tell you the honest truth, the girl doesn't know who I am. I was introduced to her in London as a Mr. John Smith, and my introducer said that that was the name by which I elected to be known, as though I were in reality somebody much more exalted. This was said to impress her at a supper-party. Well, I saw her repeatedly after that, but she never found out who I really was."

David brought his hand down upon his thigh with a resounding smack.

"Upon my word," he said exultantly, "wasn't it old Shakespeare who said, 'There's a destiny that shapes our ends,' or something like that? Hang it all, Fate is working for us. You couldn't have done it more neatly if you had tried." Then his voice changed. "Now don't you see how it can be done?" he cried. "Listen, attentively. From this moment you are no more John Smith or Philip Chesterton, you are the elder brother of the Marquis of Basingford, in other words, the Duke of Porlock. You have come to Edinburgh on the track of the family jewels which were stolen—yes, stolen, why not—for you can say that Basingford had no right to appropriate them and give them to Hetty Morton. The family have deputed you to try and get those jewels back by fair means or foul. Will Millie help you? Why, of course she will. She'll find some means of getting hold of the diamonds and then, well, there are plenty of steamers sailing for foreign parts from Leith; in fact, there is a little German—the skipper of a Hamburg boat—who would land us at Rotterdam at a word from me. What do you say, Phil? Is it worth trying?"

The other paused, though there was nothing on his face to indicate the thoughts passing through his mind.

"Yes, it's worth trying," he said suddenly with apparent nonchalance; "and I'll see if I can get word with Millie this afternoon. I'll meet you at the theatre to-night. We can see the play, and I'll tell you what I've done after the play is over. How does that suit you?"

"Excellently, and I'll run down to Leith and see if the *Schwalbe*, which is the name of the steamer belonging to my German pal, is in the docks. If she is I'll get word with the skipper so as to have everything ready in case our little business does come off."

CHAPTER II.

An Unexpected Meeting—Love, the Destroyer—A Base Plot.

"Millie, as I'm a sinner!"

"Jack, by all that's holy!"

The scene was again Princes Street on the afternoon of the same day that had seen the concoction of the plan between the two cracksmen. The *Good Samaritan* Company had arrived in Edinburgh on the Sunday, and were now prepared to open the campaign of the week in modern Athens.

Millie D'Esterre was tripping along Princes Street gazing in the shops spread with so many alluring baits to catch feminine cupidity.

Philip Chesterton, alias John Smith, had known that if there was one place in which he could be quite sure of finding his quarry, it would be Princes Street, and his intuition had proved correct, hence the greetings with which we open the chapter.

"What are you doing in Edinburgh, Jack?" asked Millie tenderly with heightened colour.

"Need you ask?" came the answer. "Did I not know that the *Good Samaritan* Company had come up North? That was my chief reason, in order to have another glimpse of the little girl with whom I have passed so many happy hours in London town. But there is another reason, and that also is connected with you. Frankly, I want your help."

"Want my help? How can I help you?"

"Jack Smith" looked at his watch. It was just three o'clock. "Look here," he said, "let's go for a drive. We can go round to the Queen's Drive, past Holyrood and have a look at Arthur's Seat. Then we will come back and have tea in Princes Street, and by that time I shall have been able to tell you how you can help me."

He hailed a carriage from a rank close at hand and helped his fair companion inside the conveyance. He gave the driver his instructions, and then getting in beside his companion, closed the window and sank back on the cushioned seat beside her.

"That's cosy," he said tenderly, and threw her an ardent look.

Millie's heart was beating wildly. The man with whom she had fallen hopelessly in love had once more crossed her path. She thought of nothing but the intoxicating happiness she had felt at being in his presence.

"First of all," began the man in a low voice, "I have a confession to make to you, Millie. My real name is not John Smith."

"As if I did not know that," answered the girl quickly; "though I think Jack is a sweet name. I do hope you

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didn't deceive me in that, anyhow, but that one part of your name at least is Jack."

A melodious laugh answered her. "No, I am afraid that even the name of Jack must be taken away," he replied; "though if you like to call me Jack, well, any name sounds sweet from those lips."

"But what is your name?" said the girl impetuously. "I've known you so long as Jack Smith that it is only fair you should now let me into the secret."

"I'll do that with pleasure, but it must be a secret, dear, for reasons that I'll explain afterwards. Promise that you won't tell anyone what I am going to tell you. And tell me also that you haven't forgotten me altogether?"

"You know I haven't!" cried the girl passionately; "I'm not that sort. I haven't forgotten you, and I don't think I ever shall. And I'll promise not to tell anyone though I don't see what harm it can do."

"You will presently," came the significant answer.

He took hold of her hand and caressed it.

"My real name, sweetheart," he said, "is Ralph Lionel Despencer Lavington D'Arcy, and that's not all."

The girl gazed at him in amazement, as well she might.

"Now you're joking again," she said petulantly.

"No I am not," came the earnest answer; "though you may be quite sure I had no hand in the adoption of such a mouthful. They are all family names, dearest, and if you must have the rest of it, well, it ends up with 'Duke of Porlock.' Now perhaps you can understand why I called myself plain Jack Smith that memorable evening when first we met."

Millie went pale.

"The Duke of Porlock!" she almost gasped. "Then I must call you Your Grace and be very distant. I rather wish you had remained plain John Smith."

"Don't look so tragic," came the gay answer, "I'll be Jack Smith to you still, darling. The accident of my being a Duke"—it was well for the girl that she could not see the grim lines of his mouth behind the silky moustache—"has not taken away the fact that I am still a man, a man, with all the passions and longings of any individual, who still has a very tender spot in his heart for little Millie D'Esterre."

"Do you mean that?" cried the girl with a sob, taking his hand in both of hers, "or are you only saying that to please me?"

"No, no! I care for you very much indeed, Millie, and I shall care for you all the more if you will try and help me in a matter that is one of the reasons for my letting myself be known as plain Jack Smith—a matter in which you can help my family as much as you do me. Have you ever heard of the Marquis of Basingford?"

"Why, rather, he was Hetty Morton's pet mash. Everyone knew that: and didn't he give her those splendid diamonds? Why every girl in the Company envies her those."

"Exactly. It is about those very diamonds that I want to speak to you."

The girl looked mystified and not a little curious.

"Perhaps," went on the false Duke, "you never heard the true history of those diamonds; that they were not the Marquis of Basingford's to give, but jewels that should have been held in trust as family heirlooms. I was abroad at the time the gift was made, or you may be sure I should have put a stop to it. And now, what I want to ask you is to help me to get the diamonds back for the honour of the family."

The girl gasped.

"Do you mean you want me to steal them for you, Jack?" she said in an almost awestruck voice.

"Well, that's rather a hard way of putting it, dearest," answered the other with a half-laugh. "It was really a theft to give them away. You see, with an old family like ours that has always prided itself upon its possessions, it was almost a criminal act of Basingford's. So will you help me?" Then his voice changed and became more tender again. "And perhaps you wouldn't be the first actress who has become a Duchess." This in a meaning tone.

The girl blushed rosy red. With eyes that sparkled brightly, infatuated with love and ambition, she gazed into the cracksman's face.

"Do you mean that if I help you to get the jewels," she said, "you will marry me?"

The man nodded.

"Then I'll do it," she went on in a low voice. "I think I would do anything to become your wife even if you were only plain Jack Smith. There, isn't that a bold confession to make?"

The man's heart was beating exultantly. Stifling a faint feeling of compunction that had risen even in his crime-stained heart at the trick he was playing, he went on:

"And I am very fond of you too, dear, as you see. And now, tell me how do you think you are going to get hold of the Porlock diamonds?"

"Well, as you can easily understand," went on the girl, "Hetty has kept a pretty good eye on them, and she has gone further than that. She has had an imitation set made exactly like the others which she wears on the stage. These she keeps together with the genuine set in her trunk. As you can understand, it won't be too easy to get hold of them, but, as luck has it, I am sharing her dressing-room."

The man gave vent to a low whistle.

"So there are two sets, are there?" he said. Then with the quick instincts of the criminal, he continued: "I've got an idea. Couldn't you pop the false jewels into somebody else's box and then go to the fair Hetty and accuse that person of theft? Then you could get hold of the real ones and the family would come into possession of its own again without the least chance of your being found out."

Millie paled. She had not quite bargained for this. To implicate somebody else had not been part of her programme. She hesitated, and the villain beside her, noticing her reluctance, brought all the powers of his manly fascination to play upon the infatuated girl.

"If you really cared for me, darling," he said in a low voice, "I am sure you would do anything for me. Think of the service you are doing to our family—your family, it may be some day—for that diamond necklet ought really to encircle the neck of the future Duchess of Porlock and nobody else."

At his words the last remnant of the girl's better feelings were shattered. From that moment she was Chesterton's heart and soul, and entered into the spirit of the plot with zest.

"There's one girl in the company," she muttered, "whom I can't stand, and whom Hetty hates, and would be only too ready to see in a tight fix. I mean Hazel Harlow, our lead. All the men are wild on her and the manager thinks of nobody but her. It's 'Miss Harlow must do this,' and 'Miss Harlow must have that,'

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and 'Miss Harlow's wishes to be consulted,' until the rest of the crowd sometimes wish Miss Harlow at the bottom of the seas. Now if I could get suspicion fixed on her she might get the sack from the company, and I, for one, would only be too happy to see her come a cropper."

"Millie, you're a wonder!" said her false lover enthusiastically, "everything is dovetailing beautifully. Now I tell you what. If you can get hold of those jewels and work the game on Miss Harlow, meet me inside the Waverley Station near the booking-office, for Carlisle and England. That will be the safest of all places to meet, because there is always such a crowd

"You can't mean that, Jack," she said in a low voice. "You must be joking."

there. I'll be at the tryst at noon to-morrow, and, anyhow, if nothing has happened you'll be able to report progress."

CHAPTER III.

"WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM?"—ACCUSED OF THEFT.

IT was six o'clock. Hazel Harlow was just entering the stage-door of the Lyceum Theatre when an attendant said to Hazel:

"Will you please go to Miss Morton's dressing-room, she wants to see you."

Rather surprised at this unusual request, for hitherto Hetty Morton had always rather shunned than courted her company, Hazel obeyed the summons, only to find the dressing-room empty. She waited there a few moments, and as no one appeared, she hurried out to run right into the arms of Millie D'Esterre, who looked at her, as she thought, in a somewhat curious way. The meaning of this was to be brought home to her later on.

"Have you seen Miss Morton?" asked Hazel lightly.

"No," answered the other curtly, and passed on.

Half-an-hour passed away and everyone more or less had come to the theatre to set about getting ready for the evening performance. Suddenly an electrifying piece of news went round the theatre precincts. "Miss Morton's jewels have disappeared." The actress had gone to her trunk to take out the trinkets, to find that both cases identical, and each containing a necklet—one false the other real—had disappeared.

Hetty Morton was beside herself, and then a more startling development was set on foot. Rumour had it that somebody connected with the theatre had appropriated the diamonds. Orders were given for everyone's dressing-room to be systematically searched. Naturally an immense amount of indignation was raised at such a proceeding.

"It's ridiculous!" said Venables, "to think that people like Miss Harlow and Mr. Monteith and Miss Lovelace and myself should have done such a thing."

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"We'll begin with Miss Harlow," she said; "I'm not going to lose those jewels without every effort being made to recover them."

Secretly indignant though she was Hazel said nothing to the excited actress, but bade her courteously turn out everything in her dressing-room. This the girl did. Judge of Hazel's feelings when, at the bottom of her trunk was discovered a green morocco case containing one set of the famous diamonds.

Words fail to describe the scene that followed. Hazel protested with all her strength that it was not her hand that had placed the jewels there.

"Then what were you doing in my room," asked Hetty, "some time ago? You were seen coming out of there by Miss D'Esterre."

"Why you sent for me yourself," cried Hazel.

"I never did," came the answer.

The person who had given the message to Hazel was sought out and she stoutly denied having given any such message. Here was evidence most damning to Hazel's innocence, though of course her friends absolutely refused to believe that it was she who had taken the jewels.

For reasons best known to herself Hetty made no mention that there had been two sets of jewels, and this omission on her part was to bear unsuspected fruit later on.

The jaundiced actress was for sending for a policeman there and then, and it was only by Venables' and Monteith's most urgent remonstrance that she was prevented from so doing.

"Very well, then," said Hetty, "I shall have Miss Harlow charged in court later on. I shall get out a warrant for her arrest with all haste. Was ever circumstantial evidence stronger?"

Remonstrances, protestations, arguments availed nothing. Jenny Lovelace, Eric and Venables, and, indeed, all those who knew in their hearts that Hazel was absolutely incapable of such a crime, begged the girl to reconsider her action. Even Hazel's protestations availed nothing.

"In consideration to you, Mr. Venables," said Hetty, "I won't wreck to-night's performance, but will wait till to-morrow, but justice shall and must be done. If Miss Harlow can clear herself well and good. If not, I must only protect myself and others."

In making this statement Hetty was urged on by two considerations; the first was personal spite against Hazel; the second was a desire to somehow discover what had become of the duplicate set. The genuine jewels could only be distinguished (except by experts) from the others by an infinitesimal scratch on one of the facets of the centre stone of the necklace—a beautiful blue diamond nearly as large as a pigeon's egg, and worth a fabulous sum in itself, as the profligate young Marquis of Basingford had known, in common with others of his family.

How Hazel acted her part that night she never knew, while the strain on Jenny and Eric was equally great. It was horrible to think that such a sword of Damocles was hanging over Hazel's innocent head. To think that on the morrow or the next day the beautiful girl whom they loved would be arraigned in a public police-court on a charge of theft made their blood boil. As for Eric, his every thought was centred on how he could find evidence to show that Hazel had been the victim of a base plot—for plot it undoubtedly was. In the first place the message that Hazel had received to go to Hetty Morton's room; secondly, the instant demand made by Hetty to have Hazel's box searched first of all. Surely the girl must somehow have known where the jewels were unless—and this suspicion could not be entertained for a moment—Hazel had really been the thief, and had been seen removing the diamonds from their place of concealment.

That was all he had to go upon, and flimsy enough it was in all conscience. It was probable that the jewels had been conveyed to Hazel's trunk some time before the theft had been committed, and by someone who knew the ins and outs of the theatre very thoroughly. It must have been someone who knew Hetty Morton pretty intimately, and where she kept her jewels.

"Will you tell me, Miss Morton," he asked her in an interval between the acts, "where you kept the jewels?"

"At the bottom of my trunk," came the answer, given somewhat churlishly.

"And the key of which you of course kept upon your person?"

The other hesitated. Like most actresses she was most free and easy as regards the safeguarding of her own belongings, and it so happened that she locked the trunk or not exactly as her memory to do so prompted her or the reverse.

"Well, no, I didn't lock it," she said, "but merely because I thought I was dealing with honest people."

Eric uttered an exclamation.

"But don't you see," he went on, "what happened? Someone came into your room and abstracted the jewels and conveyed them to Hazel Harlow's trunk which, like yours, was kept unlocked. There's the whole thing in a nutshell. You can't in your heart believe that Miss Harlow is only a common thief."

"But I do believe it," answered the girl fiercely, "and the whole world shall believe it before we are many days older."

"I wish you were a man, Miss Morton," retorted Eric, stifling his rage with difficulty; "and I'd make you answer for those words."

The other laughed scornfully.

"But I'm not," she said; "if I were, perhaps I, too, would be infatuated by Miss Harlow's beauty. As it is, I am only a weak woman, and if it gives you any satisfaction to knock me down, well, pray do so. I shall then be able to bring a charge of assault against you."

Eric bit his lips and turned aside. He could not trust himself to speak, but he knew that there would be no hope of mercy from Hetty Morton.

CHAPTER IV.

The Meeting—"You've Brought me the Wrong Lot"—A Villain's Callousness.

Besides being the largest station in the United Kingdom, the Waverley Station of Edinburgh is also one of the busiest, and the booking-offices were crowded as was usual with excited throngs of ticket purchasers. Near the main booking-office stood the spurious Duke of Porlock clad in a smart Chesterfield overcoat, and with a soft grey felt hat on his head pulled down low over his brows as though he were desirous of concealment. Punctually at noon he saw the eager figure of the girl he had made his too willing tool, searching anxiously for him. He went towards her, and in a moment she recognised him.

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"Well," he said in a low voice, fraught with anxious insistence, "how have you got on?"

"I have them," came the low answer.

"You have them!" He gazed at her almost incredulously, then reading verification in her face, he uttered an exclamation of gratified surprise.

"You darling!" he said. "You are a cleverer little woman than I thought you were, and that's saying a good deal. I'll take you to a hotel I know of not far from here and you can tell me all about it."

He led her to a closed carriage, gave a hurried direction to the driver, and in a few moments they were being driven along the cobbled thoroughfare that led to the humble inn of Canongate, where he had had the memorable interview with the mysterious David as recorded at the beginning of our tale.

But little conversation passed between the two during their short journey. Each was fully occupied with their own thoughts. The man was scheming how he could shake off the infatuated girl, the girl was building hopes on the future, though these same hopes were tempered by a dread concerning the very jewels that she had been at such labour to secure. At the humble hostelry Chesterton led the way without more ado to the room upstairs in which he had interviewed his accomplice. His first action was to take the girl in his arms and embrace her with warmth.

"And now, darling," he said, "where are the Porlock diamonds?"

Unfastening the collar of her dress with a quick motion the girl slipped off the beautiful necklace that she had put beneath her dress for safety.

Chesterton uttered a faint cry as the diamonds scintillated and coruscated before his enraptured gaze. Without a word he took them from her hands and then taking a small phial from his pocket containing an almost colourless acid, for such the liquid was, poured a drop of it on the centre gem. Then a cry escaped his lips.

"Paste!" he exclaimed hoarsely; "wonderfully good paste, but paste without a doubt. Confound it all, Millie, you've brought me the wrong lot."

The girl went white to the lips. Her worst suspicions were realised.

"I was afraid of it," she murmured; "and yet I hoped for the best. I found the jewels at the bottom of the trunk, both in morocco cases, both so absolutely identical that I couldn't tell one from the other. Somehow these looked the finer jewels. I was going to try cutting on glass with them, for I couldn't find any means of identification, when I heard someone coming, and had to take these and trust to luck. And now all I have done is useless. I've got the blame fixed on another girl, and all for nothing. And the real jewels are in Hetty Morton's safe keeping now." Then her voice changed. "But it won't alter our love, will it, Jack? Anyhow, I did my best for you. I did my best."

Chesterton's face had become hard and stern. Black rage filled his heart as he thought of the chance that had been missed, that a useless crime had been committed (though it was not the fact of the criminal side that caused him any compunction) which had resulted in the theft of a paste necklace worth not a thousand pounds or even more, but at the most five. His thoughts worked quickly. Should he cast the girl off for ever there and then, accuse her of having deceived him, of having wilfully stolen the false jewels to save her own skin, or should he still play upon the tender susceptibilities of the heart that he knew to be absolutely his own, and still urge the girl to make yet another effort to gain the coveted diamonds? On maturer reflection he decided upon this course of action.

"Let's have the whole story," he said, trying to speak gently, "and see if there is any way out of the mess."

"I managed to get the jewels stowed away in Hazel Harlow's box," replied Millie almost piteously, "though, as I have said, it was absolutely impossible for me to tell the real from the false. Then just as Hazel Harlow came into the theatre I bribed one of the attendants to tell her that Hetty Morton wanted to see her in her room. Of course Miss Harlow went up there and found no one. She waited there a few minutes and then came out to be confronted by me. Then when Hetty came to her rooms a few minutes later, I told her I had seen Hazel Harlow nosing about the room. Then, when she had missed the jewels, her suspicions went straight to the girl on whom I had meant they should fall. The jewels were found in the trunk, and Hetty is going to prosecute, and I have to be a witness against Miss Harlow."

"But the jewels," broke in Chesterton. "What ha Miss Morton done with them?" s

He spoke roughly, forgetting in his annoyance at having been baulked of the costly trinket that he should really have been the supposed lover of the girl—his catspaw.

"In the strong-room of a bank," came the tearful answer.

An impatient exclamation broke from the cracksman's lips.

"So that's the end of the whole thing," he said vindictively, careless now of the impression his words might make on Millie. "The game is up, is it? Well, you've got yourself into a mess. The best thing you can do is to get yourself out of it."

The girl staggered back as though she had received a blow in the face.

"You can't mean that, Jack," she said, in a low voice. "You must be joking. It was for you I did it all. Think, I have turned myself into a criminal for your sake, and now you speak to me like that. Jack, dear Jack."

"Oh, enough of that," interposed the man; "I should have been ready enough to have been your dear Jack if you hadn't made such a hopeless mess of things, but now"—a faint touch of compunction came into his debased heart as he looked at the pale, broken woman before him in whose eyes was agony unspeakable—"I must go now," he said hurriedly. "You shall hear from me again. It won't do for us to be seen here together. It's all your fault, Millie; you should have secured both the necklaces and tried to implicate Hazel Harlow in some other way. As for these gewgaws"—he threw the paste necklace contemptuously down upon a table—"you had better keep these as a souvenir of your acumen as a diamond expert."

With a sob Millie picked up the paste diamonds. Her eyes were blinded with tears. She turned aside to hide the evidences of her anguish from the villain who had unmasked himself so thoroughly in her eyes. Dimly, yet with woman's quick intuition, she realised that it was the Porlock diamonds and not herself that this man's heart had been really set upon. Already a suspicion had dawned upon her as to his identity with the Duke of Porlock. She brushed aside her tears and wheeled round. A low cry escaped her lips. Her false lover had gone. He had taken advantage of her pre-occupation to steal towards the door and slip away, whither she knew not.

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CHAPTER V.

The Second Necklace—A Strange Lapse of Memory—All's Well that Ends Well.

The police-court was crowded. Bad news travels on swift wings, and already all Edinburgh was ringing with the news that Hazel Harlow, the beautiful young actress, was arraigned on charge of theft.

True to her word, Hetty Morton had lost no time in pressing home the charge against the unfortunate Hazel. She had procured a warrant for the arrest of her rival, who was to appear on Thursday morning, bail for Hazel having been secured through the instrumentality of Eric Monteith and Raymond Venables so that she was at least spared the indignity of spending any time in jail.

She tottered forward, and the next moment collapsed in a heap in the witness-box.

For the defence the services of one of the best advocates in the Scotch capital had been secured. He was a young man named Macdonald, who was not without hopes of clearing Hazel from the charge preferred against her, though he was forced to admit that the circumstantial evidence against his client would be a hard nut to crack.

There is no need to set out in full the case for the prosecution as our readers are already aware of the full facts of the charge, how that Hazel had been seen by Miss D'Esterre issuing from the room of her fellow-actress, how that she had gone straight to her own dressing-room, and how that only a short time afterwards the missing diamonds had been found in the prisoner's trunk.

There was still no mention made of the existence of a second set of jewels, and strange as it may appear, Millie D'Esterre was the only person who knew of the existence of the duplicate set, for with the vanity of a vain woman Hetty Morton had concealed the fact from others that she had a second set made. It was exceedingly gratifying to be able to flaunt the famous Porlock diamonds in the faces of the other members of the Company.

The first witness called was Millie D'Esterre. Having given her deposition it became necessary for Macdonald to cross-examine her and to endeavour to discover some flaw in her statement.

"Are you aware," he said, "that a message was sent to Miss Harlow purporting to come from Miss Morton requesting my client to go to her room, and that your discovery of Miss Harlow there is to be explained by the fact that she was waiting for Miss Morton?"

"I know nothing of that," replied Millie in a low voice.

"Then it is your opinion that Miss Harlow, whose reputation is surely well enough known to exclude the

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possibility of such a deed, went to Miss Morton's room openly for the sole purpose of extracting the diamonds from her fellow actress' trunk?"

"Yes," came the somewhat faint answer.

Macdonald made a gesture of incredulity.

"Why, the thing is absurd," he said. But all further questioning failed to elicit any other answer from the witness. She still maintained that Hazel had been in the dressing-room as a thief.

And then a strange thing happened. Millie D'Esterre was suddenly seen to grow very white. She tottered forward, and the next moment collapsed in a heap in the witness-box. A policeman sprang forward. The girl had fainted. He unloosed the collar of her dress and she was taken out into an adjoining ante-room. This event naturally caused some little commotion in the court and had the effect of retarding the case somewhat. It was of course understood that the Porlock diamonds had been produced in court and sworn to by their owner as being the identical jewels presented to her by the Marquis of Basingford. Judge of the sensation in court then, when, a few moments after the removal of the unconscious Millie, the constable who had carried her out returned, and approaching the counsel for the defence, he requested a few words with him. Mr. Macdonald, craving the magistrate's tolerance for a few moments, retired with the officer, to return in a short time to the court with an expression on his face that an astute observer would have recognised as typical of elation.

"I must crave the indulgence of the court," said the barrister, "but a fresh phase has entered into the case which will, I think, admit of conclusive evidence of Miss Harlow's innocence from the terrible charge that has been preferred against her. Round the neck of the witness who has just fainted a necklace has been discovered that seems to be absolutely identical with the diamonds alleged to have been stolen by my client."

And amid the profoundest sensation he held up aloft the spurious gems that, as we know, Millie D'Esterre had placed round her neck for greater security.

The introduction of this surprise into the case that had already been fraught with so much sensation, created the profoundest amazement. Hetty Morton was called again, and Macdonald at once assailed her with questions.

"Do you know of the existence of a second necklace?" said the advocate.

"I do," in a low voice.

"Is it yours?"

"It is."

"Then will you kindly explain to the court why you made no mention of it before, and how it came to be in possession of the witness upon whom it was found?"

Hetty paused, and then seeing that there was no way out of it, she said in a low voice:

"The jewels you hold in your hand are only paste. I had them made in imitation of the real diamonds, which I did not care to always wear in public. I made no mention of them because—well, because—I forgot about them."

Here was Macdonald's opportunity.

"You *forgot!*" he said in a trenchant voice. "You forgot the existence of a set of jewels that you yourself had had made, and that you were in the habit of wearing so that people might think they were real diamonds?

"Do you really mean to stand up there and tell the court that that is the true explanation of this extraordinary occurrence? It looks to me very much like a conspiracy. Perhaps you have also forgotten, madam, how the paste diamonds came to be round the neck of the last witness?"

"I have no idea how that happened," answered Hetty, trying to speak boldly. "I am as much at a loss to understand how they came to be round Miss D'Esterre's neck as you are."

Macdonald gave vent to a contemptuous sniff far more expressive than any words could have been.

"At any rate," he said, "I think the introduction of this fresh element into the case disposes pretty effectually of the trumped up charge against my client. I beg to move an adjournment of the case until the matter can be thoroughly sifted. I understand that the last witness is incapacitated from making any further statement at present."

Such indeed was the case, for by this time Millie D'Esterre was delirious, having succumbed to an attack of brain fever that was almost to cost her her life. When she did recover she made a clean breast of everything, not disguising the fact that she had been duped by the so-called Duke of Porlock, who, needless to say, had disappeared, together with his confederate. And but for Hazel Harlow, it would have gone hard with Millie D'Esterre.

And Hetty Morton, convinced in the most conclusive way of the mistake she had made, and smarting under the remembrance of the rebuke administered to her in open court by Macdonald, felt no desire to press home the charge of theft, or to recall a business out of which she had emerged with so little credit to herself.

But "Philip Chesterton" and "David" were not to be allowed to disappear from the scene with impunity, for some months later on they were both apprehended red-handed in a burglarious attempt to break into a mansion in the north of Scotland. It was then discovered that Chesterton was, by his own confession, the very man who had been instrumental in implicating Millie D'Esterre in the robbery of the Porlock diamonds. He was imprisoned together with his accomplice, serving a sentence of ten years' penal servitude.

Liverpool was the town next upon the tour list of the *Good Samaritan* Company after a week that, notwithstanding what had happened, had been a great success from a financial point of view. At the great seaport Hazel was to be the central figure in a tragedy that owed its existence to professional jealousy, and which was to be nearly instrumental in cutting short her career for ever. Readers are referred to next week's issue of *Short Stories* for a story no less thrilling than those which have preceded it.

Footballers

Should order at once "Pearson's Weekly," ready Friday, November 15th. In that number a huge Football Competition begins, which will close in four weeks.

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The Lion Tamer's Story.

A TERRIBLE TEN MINUTES.

When you see a lion tamer stepping jauntily into the lions' den, and putting the great, skulking brutes through their paces, you wouldn't think, perhaps, to look at him, that he is exposed to much risk. But take my word for it he is.

From the moment he steps inside those bars, no matter how seasoned he may be to the business, he simply carries his life in his hand until he is safely out of the place again.

You see, most of these savage beasts, lions and tigers especially, are sharper in some ways than human beings even. They seem to know by instinct if a man has anything on his mind when he ventures in amongst them. And then they watch him.

If he allows his attention to wander, if his eye loses its grip on them for one half-second, they notice it, and are on him like a shot.

Worst of all, if a tamer takes to priming himself with drink before he enters the cage, as some of them used to do in the olden days—well, good-bye to him! His Dutch courage may stand by him all right for a time, but so sure as he's got a head on his shoulders, there'll come a day when his nerve will fail him at the critical moment, and then you may expect to see his obituary notice in next morning's papers.

I had a terrible experience in this very connection when I first took to the business, and it taught me a lesson.

Though I have been in the taming line for years now, and there's not many men who can handle their beasts more surely than I can, I never touch a drop of drink until I have got my nightly performance off my mind. I am ready enough to join in a friendly glass with any of you fellows when the show is over; but before—no thanks!

I was very young at the time that this thing happened—had only just joined Westwood's show, in fact, and was apprenticed to a tamer named Robson, who carried as many scars on his body as if he had gone through half-a-dozen campaigns.

We went into a big cage together every night, and I stood by while he made the growling, snarling brutes skip round, feeling safe enough so long as I was under his wing.

Robson—or "Old Rob" as we used to call him—had been a noted man at this kind of thing in his day. He had the power of bending those savage beasts to his will. He could make them do almost anything.

Not only in England, but all over the Continent, he had exhibited before no end of celebrities, and could show as many medals on his breast as many a Crimean veteran.

But, unluckily for him, he had fallen into the bad habit of tilting his little finger far too much.

At first he used to wait until the show was over before he tackled the whiskey bottle; then, finding his nerves a bit slack I suppose he tried to brace them up beforehand in this way.

I confess that I felt uneasy about it, for lions and tigers are not to be trifled with, and it is no joke to face them when your only safeguard is a man who might step into the cage any night in a half-muddled condition. And of all places in the world where one requires to be quite sure of himself it is there.

Many a time I tried to coax the bottle away from Old Rob when he sat brooding over it an hour or so before we were due to appear. I pointed out the terrible risks to which he was exposing the pair of us, though there was little need to do that.

He saw it, knew it better than I could tell him. But though his eyes were wide open to the fact that there was death in that bottle for one or both of us, nothing on earth would induce him to part with it.

"Ah, lad," he would say, "I am not the man I used to be, and want something to stiffen me a bit. I've kept those snarling brutes under for many a long day; but their time will come, their time will come. They'll round on me yet."

One or two of the other chaps tried their hand on him also, but had to give it up as a bad job.

When they saw they couldn't turn him, they just stood aside, and let him go his own way.

But I stuck to him. He was a good sort, Old Rob, in spite of his faults; and—and—well, there was pretty little Nellie, his daughter, and she counted for something in this business.

Poor girl, her heart was nearly broken as she saw him drifting nearer and nearer to the catastrophe which we knew must come sooner or later. Many a time, when I saw that he had taken quite enough, and actually forced the bottle from his grasp, I have caught a grateful look in those honest grey eyes of hers that caused a little flutter within me, and well repaid me for my trouble.

Nellie Robson, you must know, was engaged in another part of the show. She did all the usual tricks

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on horseback—flying through paper hoops and that kind of thing—and a lot more besides.

Ever since she was a tiny child she had watched her father perform amongst the lions and tigers. As she grew up she was always prowling around the cages, studying the great beasts and their ways, until she knew every twist and turn of them by heart. I believe from the very first she had a hankering after a tamer's life. It may have been in her nature, for this sort of thing often runs in families, and I know she had spirit enough for that or anything else.

The cage which Old Rob and I entered every night contained an African lion, a Bengal tiger, a puma, and a panther. Of the whole four the tiger was the fiercest and the panther the most treacherous, but both were kept in awe by the King of Beasts himself.

When our turn came on, and the great cage with its fierce occupants was wheeled into the ring, Nellie Robson stole in from the dressing tent and hovered about quite near the entrance until the pair of us emerged safely from behind those iron bars. I knew right well that she was on thorns the whole time. And so was I for that matter; for though Old Rob's dull eye caught something of its former fire when he found himself face to face with those savage creatures, it was only a flash in the pan. The moment the performance was over his nerves simply went to pieces, and for the rest of the evening he was usually to be found in a pitiable state of collapse.

One night I noticed with inward misgiving that he did not seem at all up to the mark. Not that he had been drinking heavier than was his wont—less if anything—but his eye was not nearly so steady, and had a queer, uncertain look in it.

I did not like that look in it at all. To me it was a danger signal.

I went so far as to draw him aside and speak to him about it, telling him straight that he wasn't in a fit state to appear.

Unluckily, that did more harm than good. He was one of those men that you couldn't argue with; if he thought you were trying to cross him, it only made him the more determined to have his own way.

At the very first word he shook me off roughly, told me to mind my own business and not to meddle with his; and as our "call" came just then, he strode out into the ring with a face as black as a thundercloud. Well, I had roused the spirit in him a bit, if I hadn't done anything else.

All the same, my heart was down in my boots as I followed him across the arena. At every step my feet seemed to be weighted with lead. I felt an odd depression over me that evening, and for the life of me I couldn't shake it off.

As we entered the cage the four beasts scurried away to the further end, where they crouched in a quiver of rage, glaring at us with open mouths and savage growls.

It was always a ticklish moment, this; and Robson, as was his wont, stood perfectly still for a second or two with his eye on the brutes as if he were gauging their temper.

He appeared to be satisfied, for he advanced boldly into the centre of the cage and thrust a wooden pole out through the bars.

I took up my position with my back to his, holding a similar pole through the bars at the opposite side. Then, at the word of command from the tamer, the lion took a flying leap over the first barrier, the other animals following in rotation, and round and round they went in this manner.

We had got about half-way through the performance, and I was beginning to think we would come out of it all right after all, when one of those unforeseen and disconcerting accidents happened, which are always to be feared in a calling of this kind.

The tiger had just come round to Robson's side of the cage; but, instead of clearing the pole, for some unaccountable reason it pulled up almost in the very act of springing.

The panther, which was close behind, jostled up against the bigger brute, and like a flash, before you could realise what was happening, the pair rolled over at my companion's feet, snarling and tearing at each other.

To this day I don't know whether Robson imagined they were about to attack him, or if it was simply a case of blind, unthinking panic.

At any rate the incident seemed to throw him completely off his balance. Without giving a thought to me apparently, he dropped his pole and fled from the cage, the little grated door closing behind him with a crash that seemed to make my heart stand still.

For one single instant I stood there in the midst of those savage, snarling beasts, as powerless to move as if I were in the clutch of some appalling nightmare. And then, oh, heavens! the great tawny lion, which happened to be nearest to me, reared himself up on his hind legs with a roar that seemed to shake the whole place, the horrible red cavern of his mouth gaping before my very eyes. The next second with one tap of his mighty paw, he stretched me full-length upon the floor!

As I went down, a sound like the roaring of the sea smote upon my ears, and I knew that the vast crowd of spectators, seated all round the place in rising tiers, had started to their feet with cries of horror. I heard, too, the shouts of the attendants as they rushed towards the cage; and then came silence—a blank!

The time that I lay unconscious in that awful position seemed to me like a long night, though I learnt afterwards it was well under one minute.

When my senses returned I became aware of a heavy pressure on the lower part of my body and wondered what it was.

Opening my eyes I found that the lion had sunk upon me, and lay there with its two massive paws planted upon my chest, pinning me to the ground in such a manner that I couldn't move even if I wanted to.

Strange to say, when I realised how completely the great beast had me at his mercy, it awakened no concern within me. I experienced no sense of fear whatever. A sort of dreamy indifference took possession of me.

I was even curious as to when the brute would begin to tear me, and wondered what part of my body he would attack first.

I lay on my back, with my head towards the upper end of the cage.

The tiger, the puma, and the panther were at the lower end, but not one of them dared dispute possession of me with the lion.

And now, as I remained pinned there to the floor, it suddenly dawned upon my dazed senses that there was

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a strange hush in every part of the crowded building. Even without moving my head in the slightest degree, I beheld, as through a mist, a sea of white faces all round the place. But not a sound came from that vast throng; some great tension, some awful suspense seemed to hold them spellbound.

What was the meaning of it? Why were the attendants grouped outside the cage there in that state of intense, breathless watchfulness? Above all, what was there behind me at which the whole four brutes were glaring, and which seemed to enrage them so?

In an instant the answer to these puzzling questions flashed through my brain. Someone had entered the cage while I was unconscious, and was standing right behind me.

Opening my eyes to the fullest extent, I tried to throw my gaze back, and there—Good Heavens!—there, within a few feet of me, I beheld Nellie Robson!

Still in her circus attire, the brave girl stood in a half-crouching attitude, facing those savage beasts without a flinch or a waver, and holding them in check by her perfect knowledge of their ways and the power she had inherited from her father. The next second, without daring to turn her head, she dropped a few words through the bars to the attendants.

"Meat!" she said. "Bring them meat—quick!"

As the great chunks of raw flesh were thrust through the bars, the tiger, the puma, and the panther fell upon them savagely, and their rending and crunching could be plainly heard in the breathless hush.

But the lion was not so easily tempted. Though a huge joint was held within a foot of him, he merely turned his head and sniffed at it.

Then, as he saw it about to be withdrawn, he rose slowly from my body, and craned his neck out after it.

Quick as lightning Nellie's hand slid along the floor and took hold of me by the collar. Now was her chance. Gently—oh! so gently—she drew me towards her; and then—Ah! Heavens!

Seeing me move, the lion turned with an angry growl, and once more his heavy paw came down upon my chest, the savage claws digging deep into the flesh.

Again the joint was thrust forward, and again he was enticed away.

This time, however, the temptation proved too strong for him and he pounced upon the meat.

In a twinkling Nellie whipped me beyond his reach.

At the same instant the attendants shoved a high grating through the bars, ran it across the cage —and I was safe!

Well, if there was dead silence before, there was uproar enough now in all conscience. How that vast crowd swayed and roared!

The air was black with waving hats, and the white flutter of handkerchiefs. And then as I was dragged out of the cage, and Nellie sprang lightly down after me, the people burst into the ring on all sides, pressing eagerly forward to shake the brave girl by the hand, and cheering as if their very lives depended upon making all the row possible!

* * * * *

Poor old Rob never held up his head again after that awful night. He retired from the business altogether. But he always had a home with us—Nellie and myself —after we were married; and I don't know which of us, he or I were prouder of her. J. HORNIBROOK.

HE: "I don't understand why some people require so much sleep. I can get along with four hours." She: "Oh, but you see, the body doesn't require nearly so much rest as the brain."

BENEVOLENT OLD LADY (giving tramp a mince-pie): "My poor man, I suppose your life has been full of trials." Tramp: "It has indeed, mum; but I wouldn't so much mind the trials if I didn't always get convicted."

IT is feared that little Johnny is not so proud of his dad as he might be were his dad a different sort of man. The other day Johnny looked at the unhandsome features of his papa, and then watched that personage move about in his shiftless fashion. Said Johnny after awhile: "Pa, were there any other men about when ma fell in love with you?"

GREAT STATESMAN: "You were in rather a sad condition when you left the banquet the other night." Reporter: "Yes, I drank more than was good for me." Great Statesman: "So I noticed. And it showed in your report of my speech. It was terribly mixed up. Didn't the editor make a row about it?" Reporter: "No; he didn't blame me. He thought you were slightly intoxicated."

SIR JOHN MILLAIS had some very funny stories regarding his sitters. One day a lady, wife of an American parvenu, came to him to have her portrait painted. At the first sitting the lady asked the great artist, curiously, what were his most expensive colours. "Oh," replied Sir John, "vermilion——" "Indeed!" interrupted the lady quickly. "Then paint me all in vermilion, if you please; my husband doesn't mind expense." It is hardly necessary to say that Sir John did not accede to her wishes.

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A Man of Spirit.

"IMPUDENCE, young man—confounded impudence—that's what I call it!" And old Mr. Widger accompanied his vocal thunder with a thump of his fist on his blotting-pad and glared at Edward Elliston.

"I'm sorry you call it that, sir," answered the "young man," in the sort of firm, respectful tone that means "Say what you like, but I'm going to get my way."

"Call it that! Why, what else should I call it? You come to me and ask for the hand of my daughter—you, an employe of mine—a clerk with a beggarly salary of three hundred."

"It's not my fault if the salary's beggarly, sir."

Mr. Widger waved the interruption away.

"Three hundred a-year," he finished. "What do you mean by it, sir?" Mr. Widger's thunder grew louder. "This is what comes of my treating you confidentially. I take you to my house, introduce you to my daughter, and you repay my kindness by falling in love with her! You have the temerity to become engaged to her. I took you to my bosom as a dove, only to find that you turn to out be a s—s——"

"Son-in-law!" finished Elliston, mildly.

"How dare you, sir! 'S—erpent,' I was about to say! Now understand me once for all, this engagement has got to come to an end."

"I hope so, sir," said Elliston, with fervent significance. "I trust we shall marry ere——"

"I mean the engagement must stop now—you understand? It must be broken off at once."

"Never, sir!"

Old Mr. Widger looked up quickly. This imperturbable young man was a little too much for him. He went red in the face, then purple, then—when governing calmness came—back to normal hue.

"Well, I must say, Mr. Elliston," he remarked, and now he was much gentler than before; "that you beat all the people I've ever met for cool cheek."

"It's a record-breaking age," ventured Elliston.

"Well, I should think it was," rejoined old Widger, fanning himself with a sheet of note-paper. "But I want you to know that you're not going to beat *me*. You're a smart young man, Mr. Elliston, and if you'd behaved yourself, you'd have got on. But when you come to me with this romantic nonsense, you make a mistake. It's only in stupid novels that clerks marry their employers' daughters. They don't do it in real life."

"Then I'm going to create a precedent."

"You're going to do nothing of the kind. You're going to get the sack! Do you hear? Unless you promise not to see or write to my daughter again, I'm going to discharge you from my employment."

"There is no necessity, sir. Kindly read that."

Elliston handed him an envelope, which Mr. Widger tore open.

"Oh, so you resign!" he said, when he had finished reading. "Then you fully expected that I should object to your engagement with my daughter?"

"Fathers always do, sir—in stupid novels," returned the young fellow drily.

"Hold your tongue!" yelled Mr. Widger. "You're very impertinent. . . . And since you resign, consider yourself out of my service from this moment. And remember that I forbid you ever to see my daughter again."

"I'll certainly remember it, sir; but I will not promise to comply with your request."

"Go out!" cried Mr. Widger, exasperated beyond bounds; "get out! You're a scoundrel, sir—an impudent scoundrel. Go!"

"Yes, I'll go!" returned the other as coolly as ever. "But before I go, I'd like to remind you that it's fortunate for you that you are Mabel's father."

"Why—what if I wasn't?"

"Well, only that I should punch your head! Good-day, Mr. Widger!" and Edward Elliston strode firmly from the office and out into the street.

"Phew!" he ejaculated to himself, as he let the cool air fan his heated brow. "I'm glad that's over! I wouldn't go through it again for ten thousand—or for anything or anybody—except Mabel of course. I'd do anything for her. And she told me to tackle her father boldly—that a mild, ordinary request wouldn't be of the least use. I was surely bold enough, but the thing is, I'm afraid, I've been a bit *too* bold. Lord, how he fumed!"

When Mr. Widger arrived home at Hampstead that night, he at once sent for his daughter.

"Mabel," he said sternly, "I have to-day received some astounding news."

"Indeed, papa!" and there was a look of complete innocence on pretty Mabel's face.

"Yes, that clerk of mine—that Elliston fellow—has had the audacity to tell me that he loves you. What does it mean?"

Mabel blushed, and her blue eyes sought the carpet.

"He spoke the truth, I think," she said simply.

"How dare he? How dare he?" I ask.

"Speak the truth?" Mabel dug the rug with the toe of a tiny slipper.

"No, I don't mean that," Mr. Widger snapped. "You're

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as bad as he is with your impertinent answers. How dare he fall in love with you—and how dare you encourage him?"

"Daddy, dear!" Mabel put her arms round her father's neck. "You don't really mind, do you? Ted—Mr. Elliston—loves me, and I love *him* dearly."

"Well, you'll have to stop it, that's all!" snorted Mr. Widger, and he gave a twist of his fingers as if he were turning off imaginary gas.

"The idea!" he went on—"the idea of your receiving the attentions of a mere clerk! You—an heiress!—it's preposterous! Why, he's not even a clerk now!"

Mabel inquired with her eyes.

"He's gone—I've discharged him. He's joined the ranks of the out-of-works."

Mabel paled a trifle and then flushed.

"Father! how could you do it?" she asked reproachfully.

"Do it? Why, I'd do it a hundred times if necessary. Such impudence!"

"You're very unjust!" and Mabel's eyes flashed indignantly. "It surely is no crime for us to love one another."

"Crime? It's worse! It's madness! But enough of this—I dismiss the subject for ever."

"You're very cruel!"

"I'm very hungry. I want my dinner!"

* * * * *

Edward Elliston was not out of work long. No man with an ounce of common-sense and a whole ton of energy ever is. And Master Edward had both in full weight. He got another berth soon at two-hundred a-year, and four months after that, induced his new employer to increase it to three hundred. So that he was once more on his old pecuniary footing. He was saving money, too.

Meanwhile, of course, he had been seeing Mabel. Brief, clandestine meetings they were for the most part, but the sweeter for that. The course of true love never did run smooth—most lovers would be terribly bored if it did. So Edward was attracted by the difficulties, and simply delighted in these surreptitious meetings.

But his face straightened when, one evening, while they wandered through the woodland paths of Hampstead Heath, Mabel confided to him that she had something serious to tell him.

"What is it, darling?" he asked.

Her eyes timidly sought his for a moment, then dimmed and turned half away, as she replied:

"It's papa!"

"What of him?"

"I don't know how to tell you—but he's so horrid!"

His eyes flashed fire.

"What's he been doing now, my own darling?" He fixed the note of interrogation with a kiss.

She looked as if, under the same conditions, she would have liked the question repeated.

He repeated part of it—omitting the words.

"Papa wants me to marry."

"So do I, my darling; there's nothing horrid in that."

"Oh, but he wants me to marry someone else."

Edward Elliston sprang back a step.

"Marry someone else!" he cried in quite a dramatic manner. "His name—his name, I say!" He looked as if he would have added, "that I may have his blood." But he didn't.

"It's Count Slumpski—a Russian nobleman."

"A Russian!" Edward looked aghast. "Mabel, it must never be!"

Mabel opened her beautiful eyes wide.

"Why, of course, it mustn't! But papa is very much in earnest about it. He mentions the matter every day."

Edward Elliston remained silent for a minute or two. Then suddenly he turned his eyes full upon the girl at his side.

"Mab," he said firmly, "there is only one thing to do. We must elope!"

Mabel blushed to the roots of her hair, then, to hide her confusion, buried her face on Edward's shoulder, with just a little exclamatory "Oh, Ted!"

Ted let her go on burying her confusion. He was always most considerate in such things. It took some time; and by the time her confusion had been effectually buried, the whole matter was arranged.

"I shall be having a fortnight's holiday soon," observed Ted. "We can get married and go on our honeymoon then."

* * * * *

On a day, about a month later, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Elliston alighted from a train at Brighton. They had been married quietly that morning, and had come to the popular south coast resort for their honeymoon.

Edward hailed a cab.

"Grand Promenade Hotel," he directed the driver, and, ten minutes later, they were there.

Scarcely had they been shown into their sitting-room, when a servant entered with a card.

Edward took it up with wonder in his eyes. Wonder grew to amazement, as he read the card—

MR. JOSIAH WIDGER.

with a pencilled inscription in the corner. "Must see you at once in No. 37."

Edward turned a little bit pale.

Mabel darted to his side.

"What is it, dear?" she asked anxiously. "You look ill."

"All right," said Edward, recovering himself, and addressing the waiting servant, "you may go. I'll see the gentleman who sent you in a moment."

Then, as the door closed, he turned to Mabel.

"Mab, my darling," he said, "don't be alarmed, but your father is here."

"Father here! Oh, Ted, Ted! He must have seen me slip away this morning, and been suspicious. Jane, my maid, must have told him. I had to confide in her. And now he's come to take me back."

"No, no, my darling!" Edward consoled, "he can't do that. You're my wife now, and nothing on earth can ever part us. But he's here, and wants to see me. I must go and see him."

There was a grimness about Edward's tone and look that startled Mabel. She clung to her husband's arm, and in a tone of supplication, begged him not to be too hard on her father.

"Remember, Ted, dear, he has always been so fond of me, and must be excused if his feelings get the better of him."

"But, Mab, he's not a tenth part as fond of you as I am, so I must be excused if my feelings get the better of me. However," Edward pursued, as he saw the tears coming into Mabel's eyes, "for your sake I'll be gentle with him." And having kissed her twice, he quitted

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the room. With compressed lips and clenched hands he arrived at the door of No. 37. He paused for a moment. Then he knocked.

"Come in!"

Edward Elliston stood face to face with Mr. Widger.

"Ha!" ejaculated the latter; "and so, sir, you've come?"

"It appears so!" Edward remarked quietly.

"So it does. And now you're here, aren't you ashamed of yourself, sir?"

Edward looked at his father-in-law square in the eyes, and returned:

"Not the least bit in the world, sir! I've done nothing to be ashamed of."

"Oh, you haven't, haven't you? You don't think then, that it's disgraceful of you to carry off my daughter and marry her?"

"On the contrary, Mr. Widger, of all things I have done in my life, it's the act of which I'm most proud."

"You stole my daughter, sir! You're a thief!"

Edward's fists clenched tighter than ever. He advanced a step. Then he checked himself, and said very sternly:

"Mr. Widger you presume on our relationship. If you were not Mabel's father I should knock you down."

As Edward spoke, the features of Mr. Widger suddenly relaxed, and to Edward's utmost surprise, he broke into a fit of the most uncontrollable laughter.

"Oh—oh—oh—oh!" he roared. "You're too much! You threatened some time ago to punch my head, and now you threaten to knock me down—all because I presume too much on *our* relationship. Oh—oh—oh!"

He paused a moment, mopped his brow with his handkerchief, and then, having controlled himself, he advanced with outstretched hand to the amazed Edward Elliston.

"Edward, my boy, give me your hand! Accept my heartiest congratulations. Fetch Mabel in as well—I want to congratulate her, too!"

Edward looked as though he thought Mr. Widger were mad.

"No, my boy, I'm not crazy," remarked the old man. "I'm really delighted. I opposed your marriage with my daughter because I wanted to make sure you were the right kind of man for her. I didn't want her to marry a fool. I wanted her to have for a husband a man of spirit. And that's just what you are. So shake hands and accept my congratulations."

The astounded Edward shook hands, unable to utter a word.

"And now, Edward," went on Mr. Widger cheerily, "take me to my little girl."

The scene between Mabel and her father was one of hysterical joy.

"But, papa," she asked presently, with a blush, "how did you know I had run away this morning?"

"Know, you little minx; why, of course, I knew! Do you think I haven't been aware of your clandestine meetings with this rascal Edward here for the past few months? When the man had the spirit to throw up a good berth with me and start all over afresh, I guessed I had a man of pluck and determination to deal with. And that's just what Edward is. Why, Mab, do you know, he threatened to knock your poor old dad down because I presumed too much on our relationship! Oh—oh—oh!" And the old fellow went off into another hearty fit of laughter.

"Well," observed Edward; "now that you're down here sir, you'll stay of course to dinner?"

"No, no," replied the old merchant. "I'll drink your healths in a glass of champagne; but as for staying to dinner, certainly not. Shouldn't have liked it myself when I was honeymooning, and shan't inflict a father-in-law's presence on you."

And, despite all protestations, Mr. Widger insisted on catching the six o'clock train back to London.

"Good-bye!" he said, as the young couple were seeing him off. "Good-bye, and God bless you! And, oh, Edward, here's a little wedding present for you. Buy Mab something nice and keep the rest for housekeeping." And he thrust a piece of paper into Edward's hand just as the train moved off.

"Why," remarked Edward, as they made their way out of the station; "it's a cheque—a cheque for £1,000! What a brick your father is, darling!"

"I'm so glad!" replied "darling." "But you deserve it, you know, because you are a man of spirit." And she smiled sweetly.

"I'm a man in high spirits, anyhow!" Edward replied. And both made their way back to the hotel in the happiest of moods.

G. Carr.

Key to *Pearson's Weekly* First Football Competition.

1. A young goose=Gosling. 2. Require cured hog=Needham. 3. GO, man who shoes horses=G. O. Smith. 4. Wild apple tree=Crabtree. 5. House at gate of park=Lodge. 6. Consume by fire=Burnup (or Byrne). 7. Pay up=Settle. 8. Cluster of bushes=Thickett. 9. Cottager indisposed=Cotterill. 10. Male child of Henry=Harrison. 11. Garden tools for scraping=Raikes. 12. An extensive wood=Forrest. 13. A kind of fish and a village=Chadwick. 14. Military engagements=Battles. 15. A drink=Beveridge. 16. Railway carriage=Carr. 17. Satisfactory victory=Goodwin. 18. Husks of ground corn=Brann. 19. A small twenty-hundredweight=Littleton. 20. A well-known writer=Ballantyne (or Barr). 21. See short-tailed animal=C. Hare. 22. Legs=Shanks. 23. Walk like a duck=Waddell. 24. A man who works in a garden=Gardner. 25. Grumpy=Cross. 26. Mac's not ill=Maxwell. 27. Our greatest general=Roberts. 28. Odoriferous=Smellie. 29. Not wrong=Wright. 30. Inter=Bury. 31. Robust=Birley. 32. Dark brook=Blackburn. 33. Entirely rooster=Alcock. 34. Lively=Gay. 35. Silly, look at the horse-fly=J. C. Clegg (Jay, see clegg). 36. Outer coating of fruit=Rhind. 37. Glowing atoms=Sparks. 38. Benjamin swallowed food=Bennett (Ben ate). 39. An underground chamber=Sellar. 40. Not the former=Latta. 41. Cunning=Wylie. 42. Look at a dusky colour=C. Brown. 43. Ah, Gee! bend your knee=R. G. Neil. 44. The fish consumed food=Bassett. 45. A herbaceous plant=Amos. 46. A fuel=Cole. 47. An assistant=Clarke. 48. To ward off=Parry. 49. Various=Divers. 50. Reed instrument=Fyfe.

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Stanley Green's Deception.

"No luck again, Madge," groaned Stanley Green, as he entered the room in which his wife was anxiously awaiting him. "How is Dora? Has the doctor been?"

There was a moment's pause before Madge replied; she was trying to recover from the pang of disappointment which had shot through her on hearing her husband's first words and also from the emotion caused by his inquiries.

"I am very sorry, Stanley dear, but—but perhaps our ill-fortune will turn soon. No, our little darling is no better, the doctor says, and I—I fear—she is worse. Doctor Leyton says we must give her all the nourishment we can. She is sleeping just now and I hope——"

She was unable to finish the sentence, for there seemed but little room for hoping that the black cloud which overshadowed them would soon lift.

"Oh, Heaven, why are we so sorely tried?" cried Stanley, the words wrung from him by bitterness of heart. "Ever since I was ill three years ago, misfortune has followed us unceasingly. For myself I do not care, but for you and our little one—Oh, it is too hard!"

These words brought strength to Madge as nothing else would have done.

She rose from her seat, crossed the room to where her husband stood with half-uplifted hands and with anguish written on every feature, and placed her arms lovingly round his neck.

"Stanley," she said gravely and tenderly after she had kissed him, "it is the duty of a man to suffer and be strong! Oh, my dear husband, it would be the last drop—the drop that would make my cup of sorrow overflow—if you, my ideal, were to falter and fail under trial!"

"Man is kept strong by such angels as you!" cried Stanley, passionately kissing her and pressing her to his breast.

They had been married five years. People said that Madge, although she could not exactly claim to be pretty or of higher social standing than Stanley Green, might have made a much better match. She had had at least one suitor who possessed money, and they could not understand why she should prefer to be the wife of a man holding a position in an office at a salary of two hundred a year, even if he were possessed of capabilities that would insure his rising.

But they had not seen Stanley Green in the same light as Madge had seen him; and she had joyfully become his wife, and for two years their happiness was as perfect as human happiness could be.

Then the demon influenza had laid his grasp on Stanley and when he had recovered from a severe illness it was to find that his once brilliant mental powers had been terribly impaired. His memory failed him at intervals with startling suddenness, and at others, he did the most stupid things—from a business point of view—although he believed at the moment that they were quite correct. The result was that he lost the situation which had been kept open for him during his illness; he had obtained others, only to lose them after a short period of service. The little stock of money soon disappeared, trinkets and other things were disposed of; Stanley obtained some odd work now and then and Madge did a little in various ways, so they just managed to keep afloat, and now, to crown the edifice of trouble, their little one had fallen ill.

When husband and wife returned to the little sitting-room, they felt more calm and were able to discuss the situation quietly. Their deliberations were interrupted by a tap at the door; it proved to be the landlady's maid of all work, who brought a packet for Mr. Green.

"It must be the jelly," said Stanley, cutting the string. "I had clean forgotten it. I met John Harcourt this morning and he asked how we were. I did not tell him how low down we were, but I said that Dora was very ill and he was good-natured enough to promise to send this. The little darling will enjoy it, won't she, Madge?"

"Yes."

The word came slowly from Madge's lips, while a slight tinge of red mounted to her cheeks.

John Harcourt had been her well-to-do suitor, but he had attracted her very little; she knew of nothing against him but she had not cared for him.

When Stanley appeared on the scene, Harcourt's chance of success completely vanished, and this fact the latter had not forgotten nor forgiven.

On the following morning Harcourt again met Stanley as the latter was wandering from place to place in search of work. Again he made the same kindly inquiries, and in the afternoon another delicacy was sent for the little one, whose condition remained unaltered.

During the next ten days Harcourt met Stanley four times and on as many occasions a delicacy was conveyed to the house in which they lived.

On the eleventh day, Stanley suddenly found an arm linked in his and heard Harcourt's voice.

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"You must come and have lunch with me at the club, my dear fellow. I'm sure you can spare the time—your business cannot be immediately pressing, and it is nearly one o'clock. You commercial men do eat sometimes, I suppose? You always seem to be so confoundedly busy that I really doubt it at times."

Stanley's face flushed and he tried to utter some words of excuse, but Harcourt merely said "Tut, tut!" and drew him along with a firm grip.

Stanley ate but little of the good things that were placed before him, for his thoughts went away to the little sitting-room where Madge was probably dining off bread and cheese.

The food seemed to choke him. Oh, if he could only have her with him to share it!

Luncheon over, Harcourt insisted that they should spend a few minutes in the smoking-room and Stanley felt powerless to refuse. He was weak from worry and proper food, and his morning's tramp had nearly exhausted him; he was partly fascinated by the other man and allowed himself to be led to a favourite corner and installed on a cushioned seat.

Harcourt took good care that his guest should partake freely of wine and then he began to talk. His words were uttered in a quiet tone and with an air of concern, his eyes at the same time watching every expression on Stanley's face.

At first the latter did not catch the meaning of what was said; the wine had contributed to make his mind still more confused, and it was not until he caught the name of Kate Barbour that he really began to understand.

Kate Barbour! He had almost forgotten that shallow-pated girl who had been rather sweet on him before he had become betrothed to Madge; what little brains she possessed had always been filled with romantic ideas culled from cheap novelettes, and the fact that she was still Miss Kate Barbour was a proof that, despite her independent income, she was not attractive enough to be selected as a partner by any sensible man.

"But perhaps I am wronging her," thought Stanley with some remorse. "She was a long way from being to my liking, but she had some good in her, I believe. But what is Harcourt talking about?"

Then, aloud to his companion, he continued:

"I beg your pardon, but I fear I have not heard all you have said. What was that about Miss Barbour?"

Harcourt was not in the least put out by his companion's inattention and he began again.

"Miss Barbour and you were on friendly terms at one time, I know, so I need not tell you that she has some foolish notions. Now, she has of late conceived the notion that it would be a splendid thing to be run off with by some suitable member of our sex. Well, her aunt, who is a friend of mine, is afraid that the silly woman will run away with some worthless scamp and wishes to avoid that catastrophe and teach her a lesson. It is quite on the cards that some fellow will try to do it for her money."

"Yes," said Stanley inquiringly, "and what is that to do with me now?"

Harcourt coughed drily and took a sip at his glass before continuing.

"Mrs. Evin and I have decided upon a plan by which we hope to cure the young lady of her foolish notion. In order to carry out that plan we must have the services of a thoroughly trustworthy man. We want you to be that man."

"Please explain further," requested Stanley hesitatingly.

The idea was not altogether pleasing.

"To put it briefly," returned Harcourt, "we have schemed an elopement—that is, a pretended one. We want you to be the man to run away with her."

"The idea is absurd!" exclaimed Stanley. "How on earth am I to run away with her?"

"Didn't I tell you that it was merely a pretence?" asked the other in an injured tone. "The girl will be mad at first, but she will soon get over that and in time she will herself thank you for it. You will have nothing whatever to do but to go with her somewhere—wherever you like—except that I may possibly ask you to write a letter to Miss Barbour just to make the thing look plausible."

Stanley flatly refused, but Harcourt was not daunted. He knew his man, and was convinced that by judicious appeals to Stanley he could so work on the man through his love for his wife and child that he could induce the unhappy husband and father to yield.

It took more persuasion, however, than Harcourt imagined; he offered Stanley twenty pounds for his assistance, then thirty, then fifty.

Fifty pounds!

Stanley's brain began to whirl; for that sum he had worked three whole months even in his days of fortune—what did it mean to him now! Would he be doing anything very wrong, after all?

He would not dare to tell Madge the truth, for he knew instinctively that she would not agree; he must tell her a falsehood. He had never deceived her before and he hated to do it now, for she believed in him so implicitly; but fifty pounds might save them all, so did not the end justify the means?

Harcourt could see that his victim was yielding and he clinched the matter by a renewed offer.

"We'll make it seventy-five pounds. We are not particular to a few pounds so long as we save this girl from probable harm."

"I'll do it!" exclaimed Stanley. And they shook hands on it.

"I have already begun to carry out this scheme," said Harcourt, "and the girl believes that she has been in correspondence with an ardent, but unknown admirer, who dare not woo her openly just now for certain powerful reasons which he will explain later. The correspondence has been managed through the medium of a small shop keeper, and the admirer's letters have all been type-written. But now that the thing is coming to a head, you must write a note in your own handwriting, making the appointment, just to make it look genuine. Have I not told you that I have arranged all the details?" he demanded somewhat tartly as Stanley was beginning a question.

Stanley gave up further opposition, deciding to concern himself only so far as absolutely required. Seventy-five pounds! The vision haunted him, and nerved him to crush all qualms of conscience at his duplicity.

Two days later, Mr. John Harcourt was ushered into the presence of Miss Kate Barbour and at once began a hurried apology.

"My dear Miss Barbour, it is with the most profound regret—really I am most vexed! I have important business, which is taking me away from town this very

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afternoon and I shall be unable to accompany you to the North to-night. What a shame! I am afraid that you will have to go by daylight and alone."

"Oh!" ejaculated the young woman in a tone of deep disappointment. "And we had planned it so nicely. I was quite looking forward to a night journey."

"I knew you would be disappointed, so—I hope you won't blame me."

"What?"

"I have taken it upon myself to find a trustworthy friend to go with you, so that you might have your way in spite of all. I have spoken to Mr. Stanley Green, who has business in Marlington and was going to-morrow, but has consented to travel by the midnight train and act as your escort. You know him."

"Oh, that will do nicely. Mr. Green—I thought he was a nice man some time ago, and I suppose he hasn't altered."

"We have been friends for years," Harcourt assured her. "And it will be—like an elopement," he added slily.

"So it will! I'll tell him that just to make him feel uncomfortable, that I will!"

Stanley Green came back in great haste on the morning of the eventful day and astonished Madge by telling her that he had secured a temporary appointment in his old firm; he was to go off at once to the provinces and would be away for three days, after which he would take up a subordinate position in the office, and he handed the delighted Madge five pounds, which he said was an advance of salary kindly made by the head of the firm.

The landlady of the house was surprised beyond description when Madge appeared at her door with a smiling face and held out a sovereign as a first payment of the arrears of rent; the young mother seemed completely transformed.

The cloud was lifting at last; Stanley had got a situation, which, as his memory was now better he would doubtless keep, and Dora was rallying. The silver lining was showing itself; Madge's heart was glad.

The day waned and night fell; it was ten o'clock and Madge was asking herself whether she might venture to retire. Since five o'clock Dora had been worse and she feared a relapse; she had not sent specially for the doctor and, as the child now seemed easy again and Madge was very tired, she decided to snatch a little sleep.

She had hardly arrived at this decision, when a tap came at the door and the servant peeped in to say that a gentleman wished to see Mrs. Green on very urgent business.

It was Harcourt. He had followed the girl upstairs and now entered the room with an apology for intruding.

"Mrs. Green," he said gravely, "in spite of our old acquaintance I would not dare to make this intrusion had I not something of the gravest importance to communicate."

"My husband!" exclaimed Madge, turning pale with fear. "Something has happened to him!" She clutched his arm imploringly. "Oh, do not keep me in suspense!"

"Pray calm yourself, Mrs. Green," admonished her visitor, soothingly. "No bodily harm has come to him; the mischief is moral."

"It would be well to await his return and make the charge in his presence," Madge said with a mixture of haughtiness and anger, as she half-raised her hand to point to the door.

"He will not return. He has found someone more to his liking and with money enough to lift him out of poverty and keep him out of it."

Harcourt prepared himself for an outbreak of anger, but the result was different. Madge was weak with mental strain and physical work, and her remaining strength failed her under these terrible words. She tottered to the nearest chair and sank on it, her face as white as death.

"It's false!" she gasped in a husky whisper.

"I know how this must pain you," continued Harcourt tenderly. "And I would not have undertaken the task of telling you, but that the affection I once expressed is as ill as strong as ever and—Oh, I can no longer stand by and see your husband deceive you, Madge!"

For once in his life Harcourt made a mistake; the intrusion of these words of love in the midst of her anguish filled Madge with indignation and infused renewed strength into her exhausted frame. With blazing eyes she sprang to her feet and pointed to the door.

"Go!" she cried, her usually sweet voice hoarse with passion. "How dare you insult my husband and myself in this way? He would never stoop to even one of those petty acts which are as nothing to others! he is the soul of honour and I will believe nothing against him. I will believe in him against the whole world. Go!"

"I can give you convincing proof," said Harcourt, once more self-possessed. "I can show you a letter written by him to Miss Kate Barbour, a former sweetheart; and I can take you to the railway-station, where you can see him keep the assignation with your own eyes."

He took from his pocket the letter which he had induced Stanley to write, but which of course never reached the addressee. He held it so that Madge could see it by the the light of the oil lamp; her eyes went to the sheet of paper because she believed that it would prove false and so vindicate her husband. But she started on seeing the handwriting and mechanically took it from him and read it through.

There was no doubt about the handwriting, and the contents were plain enough. Once more strength failed the overwrought body and she sank on her knees and burst into a flood of tears.

* * * * *

It wanted but five minutes to midnight when Stanley Green and Miss Barbour entered the booking-office. Stanley hurried to the window and asked nervously for two first-class tickets, quite unconscious that his wife's eyes were fixed upon him and that her ears were strained to catch his every word. She had agreed to watch for him, still half-believing that Harcourt's information was false.

She would probably have rushed up to him, but Harcourt thought it prudent to detain her by urging her to let the guilty man actually get into the train so that he should be unable to invent any excuse.

Stanley offered his arm to his companion and conducted her to the platform where a train was waiting.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered, as he sank back among the cushions. "I am glad that Harcourt has arranged it so that she does not expect me to make love to her—I really could not do it, not for seventy-five pounds! But she certainly is quiet for a girl who is being run away with. Poor Madge! How I have deceived her. I have done it so that she and our little girl may benefit."

He was still thinking of his wife and staring dreamily

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out of the window when the train started. As it glided along the platform his eyes fell upon a figure; he turned white as he caught the accusing eyes and expression of that white face and uttered a groan of "Madge!"

Madge herself fled wildly from the station, and before Harcourt could recover himself and follow her she was lost to view.

That journey seemed like an age to Stanley, Green and he scarcely spoke a word all the time, somewhat to Miss Barbour's disgust and alarm, for she thought he looked ill.

It did not surprise Stanley to find a carriage waiting for her at that early hour, because that was part of the plan, but he was just conscious enough to feel rather astonished that Miss Barbour made no fuss about her elopement being thwarted—in fact she seemed to take it as a matter of course.

Stanley saw her into the carriage and then dashed back into the station to ask the time of the first train to London. The irregularity of his conduct did not strike him at all. But his action upset part of Harcourt's plan, for the latter had arranged to have him waylaid and kept confined for a few days.

It was noon on the following day before Stanley Green, weary in body and mind, reached his home.

"Madge, Madge!" he cried as he entered. "Oh, Madge——"

"Stanley Green," said a voice which he scarcely recognised, "our ways are separate from this moment!"

"Madge," he cried in desperation, "listen to me! I deceived you, I am a wretched and despicable man, but——"

"In there," she interrupted in a toneless voice, pointing to the bedroom, "lies all that remains of the child you deserted. She had a relapse and died before—before I could get back. Look at her, and then go your way! Do not come here to me to deceive me again; you cannot deceive me, for I have found you out."

"But, Madge, listen to me!" cried Stanley desperately.

He understood that his wife believed him guilty and he was horrified.

"I know I deceived you, my dear, but it is not what you think. Oh, Madge, do not harbour such thoughts against me. Listen to me, dear, and I will explain all."

Madge was about to interrupt, when he stepped forward and took her in his arms, despite her struggles.

He understood that the terrible ordeal had affected her mind.

"You shall listen to me, Madge," he cried almost fiercely, as he kissed her passionately. "I have done wrong, but I did it for your sake—for your sake, Madge!"

The appeal in his voice and his eyes seemed to sink into Madge's very soul and arouse her from her half-demented condition. She gave a great sob and yielded to his embrace with the words:

"I ought to have known. I have done wrong as well."

Side by side they sat and each told the story of the past few hours, and light began to dawn upon the dark mystery. There had been a plot against them.

When the first burst of grief at the death of his little one had passed away, Stanley's heart was filled with a fierce desire to inflict punishment upon the man who had sought to ruin his domestic life and had partly succeeded.

He would have gone in search of Harcourt had not Madge restrained him.

Towards evening, as they were finishing a frugal tea of which they had forced themselves to partake, they were startled by a rap at the door, followed by the turning of the handle and the entrance of a male figure.

The new-comer was evidently as much surprised at seeing two occupants of the room as those two people were at seeing him, for he uttered an exclamation and would have retreated. But Stanley rushed at him and clutched him by the throat.

"You villain!" shouted Stanley as he shook Harcourt with all his strength.

"Let me go!" gurgled Harcourt.

Madge hurried to the struggling men and begged her husband to desist, for Stanley was throttling his opponent.

Stanley loosened his grasp enough to allow Harcourt to breathe and hesitated for a moment; then he suddenly twisted Harcourt round and kicked him down the stairs and into the street, where the much rumpled, hatless and smarting plotter was glad to take to his heels.

On the following morning they received another unexpected visit, the visitor being none other than Miss Kate Barbour.

"I have come to make an explanation and I should like to speak to your wife alone, Mr. Green."

Stanley bowed in silence, and went out of the house. Then Kate seated herself opposite Madge and began to ask questions and make her own statement.

"What a rascal he is!" she cried, her tones betraying both vengefulness and vexation. "I know I am rather silly and giddy, but fancy a man taking advantage of that in order to work out a plot against someone else! But I'll pay him out for it! It was my aunt who set me thinking and then I found out that Mr. Green had returned to London, so that he could not have had any business in the town. So at last I was so worried that I decided to come back and get to the bottom of it. By a little trickery I got your address from one of Harcourt's servants and here I am."

There was silence for a little while and then Kate continued:

"You are in very bad circumstances," she said gently, "and I intend to atone for my foolishness by helping you. No!"—as Madge opened her lips—"It will do me good to be of some use; I feel that I have led a very useless existence. Come, my dear Mrs. Green, let us be friends."

Madge was sorely in need of sympathy and a friend, and she allowed the other to take her hands and press them. Then Kate Barbour acted the part of a true woman and drew her new friend closer to her while Madge sobbed in mingled sorrow and joy.

Kate was as good as her word, and in less than a week Stanley was in a new situation in a firm in which Miss Barbour had an interest.

She helped the Greens unobtrusively in many ways and brought sunshine into the home once more. She also contrived to make things so uncomfortable for Mr. Harcourt that he deemed it advisable to take up his residence permanently on the Continent.

Miss Kate Barbour, still unmarried, often pays a visit to the Greens, where she is vociferously welcomed by a sturdy youngster who rejoices in the same name as his father and who calls her "auntie."

GEORGE DAY.

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Last Century.

Christmas is usually a time of damp and dark depression.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Therefore the Christmas Number ought to have been abolished long ago.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
It was getting on people's nerves.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
There was no element of joy or surprise in it.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
We knew what it would contain before we opened its pages.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
There was the girl getting kissed under the mistletoe.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
There was that game of blind man's buff with the old gentleman tumbling over the chair.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
There was the coaching party—broken down in the snow, of course—and it was still snowing.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
There was the ridiculous ghost and the haunted chamber.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
There was a robin-red-breast occupying a whole page!

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
And if you were lucky you'd get a churchyard scene as well,

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
And a man lying dead with a dagger through his heart, in the forefront of the picture.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Then there was the story of the burglar who went home crying,

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
And empty handed because the little flaxen-haired girl thought him to be Father Christmas.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Also the story of the long-separated family united on Christmas morning.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Together with a short problem novel; the highwayman;

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
A comedy in one act; or a charade which nobody ever read or performed.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Then there was that fearful "presentation plate."

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
If it was not a little girl with a cat,

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
It was a little boy with a dog.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Or it was something after the "death with glory" type.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
A British soldier was facing the usual fearful odds.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
He held a smoking revolver from which the last cartridge had been discharged.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Or he held a broken sword and stood astride his dead horse.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
(He would have had more room out in the open but you must make allowances for Art.)

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
A dozen or two blacks surrounded him and a few thousand more hurried to their assistance.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
He died singing "God Save the King."

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.

This Century.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
The first number of a new century—will not be anything like that.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Will be mainly fun, just pure fun.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Will not be all fun, of course, but it will be light, easy reading throughout.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Is new in every sense of the word. New in shape—for Pearson's—

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
New in its reading, new in its illustrations.

PEARSON'S CHRISTMAS NO., READY NOV. 20.
Even the coloured plate is a new idea. We searched the country for the twelve prettiest babies that could be found. Here you get them in all the colours of the rainbow in a panel plate A YARD LONG—in short,

A YARD OF BABIES.

SOMETHING NEW
IN CHRISTMAS NUMBERS,
IN ILLUSTRATIONS,
IN READING,
IN PLATES.

Pearson's Christmas Number,

WHICH WILL BE THE EXTRA XMAS NUMBER OF "SHORT STORIES," AND ALL THE PEARSON PUBLICATIONS,

cannot be reprinted, nor can this lovely plate.

IT WILL BE READY ON THE 20th.

Nearly the whole of the edition has already been subscribed for.

We believe we could have sold twice as many as we have printed.

That is our loss.

It will be your loss if you do not

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ONE SHILLING.

In a few days it may be selling at double or treble this figure.

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DEAD TO THE WORLD

By Henry T. Johnson.

Author of "Crux Vincit," "The Pride of the Ring," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST CHAPTERS.

Richard Seldon, a convict, escapes. In a train he meets Cyril Roylance just back from Australia, whom he murders and impersonates. He assumes the rôle of squire, and pays attention to Doris Dale.

While visiting the Dales, the butler is murdered by Seldon and two accomplices, but he so manages that the guilt is fixed on Jack Branscombe, Doris' lover. Branscombe is away from home when the verdict against himself is pronounced, and on his return meets Doris.

CHAPTER XIV. *(continued.)*

Nearer and nearer came the sound of horses' hoofs, and the voices of the mounted man and the companion walking beside him. And Branscombe, listening as it seemed with heart as well as ears, thrilled as he heard his name.

"That was the man, Mr. Rossiter, no doubt," the mounted policeman was saying. "Pity there was only one chap on the down platform at Mattingham, and he a sleepy-headed dunderhead; but, wool gatherer as he was, when he noticed how the man hurried with his cap peak pulled down and his ulster collar turned up, and besides that his ticket was for Hazelwick, the station beyond, it set him wondering, and if he'd only had the sense and pluck to have set out after him then and there, we might by this time have had the bracelets on Barker's murderer. We gave it him pretty straight, I can tell you, about letting him slip, but by the time he'd done wondering there was another train coming up, that had to be cleared, and by that time, of course, the man had got a clear start, so the chief ordered me to ride over and warn you."

"I am much obliged to him," said Rossiter. "I'll have this district scoured and my men posted at every likely spot. By the bye, I'll plant one here," and as he spoke he walked up to the lych-gate, peered inside, and stood within a few yards of the very spot where Doris and Jack crouched, holding their very breaths.

And it seemed to them that the beating of their own hearts would betray their hiding place, as, after a pause of seconds, which seemed to them so many hours, of agonising suspense, he turned away, and the sound of footsteps and horses' hoofs receded, and at last merged, into the silence of the night.

"Jack, Jack," she whispered; "you see how the toils are closing round you."

"Yes, yes," he answered; "and surely it is best for me to face my accusers."

"Not with your hands bound as they are by the threads woven of suspicion, of deluding circumstance, and unhappy mischance. No! you shall not seal the unjust doom that hovers over you."

"What can I do?" he asked in a tone of bitterness, maddened at his very helplessness in the face of falsely accusing circumstance.

"That we must think out," said Doris. "For the present you must—you shall—put yourself in my hands, and I will be your guide."

Before he could argue, or even remonstrate, she had seized his arm, led him by the path through the nut coppice that closed like a leafy screen behind them as they entered, and so to the shrubberies of the Grange and to a postern gate which, by a secret spring, she opened; that very postern gate by which her loyal ancestor had led out his fugitive king in the guise of a serving man, with the pack horses waiting at that very lych-gate. Closing on its rusty hinges, that iron-clamped and studded oaken door, she led him by a dark and winding narrow passage to that secret chamber wherein the second Charles had lain safe in cover while the Roundhead pack were drawing all the county blank. Then, leaving him there while she went in quest of food and comforts for him, she drew a bolt, pushed aside a canvas frame, stepped down into the library, then, with her own fair hands, replaced the picture by Sir Peter Lely of the second Charles, covering the very hiding place of the original of that historic portrait.

And not a moment too soon; for her father, entering the library, said:

"Doris, it is time for you to dress. Remember we are dining with the Ponsonby Smiths this evening, and it's a long drive to Brettelby Court."

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"Very well, father," she replied.

"And, Doris," he went on, "I want to speak to you seriously. It has come as a great shock to me the news of your persistence in that foolish entanglement with that young scoundrel."

"Scoundrel, father?"

"You know very well whom I mean."

"Yes, father, I can guess, but the man you mean has not yet been even tried for—for what you mean; still less has he been found guilty."

"No!" thundered her father angrily, "and why? Because he has flown from justice! No more of this, I have done with imploring and intreating. I command you to dismiss out of your thoughts, out of your heart, yes, out of your life, this wretch who has already done so much to darken it. You are going to-night among people of your own set and class——"

Even in the midst of her grief, thinking of the Ponsonby Smiths, Doris smiled.

"Friends who are disposed to save you from your own folly and to gloss over the imprudence with which you have linked your name to one that has so swiftly sprung into criminal notoriety. And, in particular, you will meet one there who is ready, able, willing, eager, to give you even now the shelter of his own good name. You know who I mean, you know what I mean! It has not pleased Providence to bless me with a son; disobey me, and remember I cease to have a daughter!"

He watched her sternly as she glided, pale and silent as a spectre, out of the door, and even with anger at what he deemed her disobedience raging in his heart, he could but feel a pang of pity there too, for, with all his pride, and notwithstanding that he was intent upon her carrying into effect the plan of his pride, that plan was formulated, so far as he forced himself to believe, in her interest, as well as in his own—and he loved his daughter!

But he loved the fame of his ancient house even more; if it came to a choice between his daughter and the honour of his house he knew which he would cast aside, and he knew it would not be the honour of his house! And thinking of the man who, to his mind, had brought about the gulf between himself and his child, the man whom he believed had, in cold blood, foully murdered his old and faithful friend and servant, he clenched his hands and teeth.

"The wretch! the villain!" he exclaimed. "Oh, John Branscombe, it is well for you that you are far beyond my reach, for, if it were not so, I myself, with my own hands, would give you into the hangman's."

He little guessed that there beyond the mellowed canvas from which the debonair, beruffled Charles beamed down, John Branscombe, bowed with anguish, heard.

CHAPTER XV.

"A Quick Change."

"We've got the right sort, to-night, Maria," said Mr. Ponsonby Smith, with a smile as broad as his white waistcoat, and Mrs. Ponsonby Smith with dignified asperity replied:

"Did you expect the wrong sort at my table, Joseph?"

"No, my dear, only"—and unable to find a suitable explanation, Mr. Ponsonby Smith ejaculated: "You're a wonderful woman!"

"Yes," replied the lady, "I should like Rebecca to be here to-night." For Rebecca was Mrs. Ponsonby Smith's sister, and at a stage in their upward flight when the Ponsonby Smiths had not reached their present altitude had emphatically and acidly expressed her conviction that Joe might buy a place in the country, but with all his money he wouldn't buy a place in county society, and Mrs. Ponsonby Smith reflected with complacency that while Rebecca, whom she had never forgiven for having years ago presumed to look down upon Ponsonby Smith because he kept a butter shop, while she had married a solicitor's managing clerk who was learning his articles, was struggling to make ends meet on about three hundred pounds a year, she was entertaining to dinner, amongst others, two county magistrates, one member of Parliament, a real live lord, and their respective womankind. For the solicitor's managing clerk was still a managing clerk, albeit a solicitor, but Joseph Ponsonby Smith was a millionaire. For Joseph had prospered. In the first place, he had had a fire, and, phœnix like, out of the ashes of the little shop with one window there had arisen a provision store with a plate-glass double frontage. And Joseph had got on to the Vestry, shortly after which he had developed a happy knack of acquiring small properties which happened to have to make way for parochial improvements, and in such cases, of course, even vestrymen have to be properly compensated. By and bye, Joseph took another shop, and another, and yet others, and by and bye, in many quarters many men drove Joseph's horses in Joseph's carts. And on and on he went along the high road to prosperity with accumulating velocity. And the wife of his bosom severely subdued her sister by referring with sniffs to her husband's clerks, and his cashiers, and his managing clerks! And Rebecca went home and wept.

In those days the Ponsonby Smiths were only the Smiths; it was at a later day that they took up the prefix Ponsonby, one of the shops being in Ponsonby-street. At the date of our making their acquaintance they were contemplating, by license, reversing the position of the Smith and the Ponsonby, as doubtless in the fulness of time they will drop Smith.

"Now, Joseph," said the lady, "mind, you'll offer your arm to Lady Limberg; she's an old cat, but she's a very old family, and these people they've got their ways, and you must ask his lordship to take me down. He's an old fool, but he's a lord, though he don't look it! And, Joseph, just remember this time and don't flop down into your seat until all the ladies have taken theirs; and don't go telling people how much you paid for the wine, and, whatever you do, don't go explaining the points about butter and telling people all about cheeses; you may know more about cheeses than anybody else at the table, but that's just what you don't want them to know that you know. And, remember, if you hear me clinking my champagne glass accidentally with a fork, that's a warning to you not to put your foot in it."

"All right, my dear; you know it's most marvellous, it is, the way you've picked up society ways. I say, we have got there, haven't we, Maria? Astonishing what you can do with money! You can't do much without it, and there ain't much you can't do with it. But I never thought we should have got on visiting terms with that there stuck up Harcourt Dale. Fancy a haughty, starchy, old buffer like him having such a nice daughter."

"That was my contriving, Joe. I got that smart young Mr. Roylance to say he'd come to dinner, hinting that the Harcourt Dales would be here; then, knowing how her father was pitching the girl at the young fellow's head, I'd only got to mention that he was coming to get them here."

"You are a contriver, Maria! But, I say, what an awful thing it is for that girl letting her name get mixed up with that young villain of a Branscombe's, and with a smart young chap like Cyril Roylance fairly gone on her. Ah, I'd give a lot of money to have that chap's style and be just as free and easy as he is in society."

"Oh, it'll come in time, Joe. He's had more practice than you, and practice makes perfect, that's all. Now I

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must go down, they're arriving. Don't forget when I clink my glass."

"What's the matter with that woman? Has she got the fidgets, or is it nerves?" Lady Limberg, fixing her pince-nez, asked her neighbour at the dinner table. "She keeps tapping her champagne glass with a fork as if she were a singing teacher trying to get C!"

"I rather fancy," replied her neighbour, "she's using it as a bicycle bell to warn her husband to mind how he comes round the corner. There it goes again; see, he pulled up short just as he was telling your husband what his Chateau Lafitte cost him a dozen."

"What an observant man you are, Mr. Roylance, you'd make an excellent detective. By the bye, wasn't it smart of that man Rossiter?" She dropped her voice to a whisper, for Doris Dale was only some four seats down, and her father was across the table.

"Yes; they've got up the case pretty well considering how little they had to go upon," her neighbour replied. "Where shall you winter?"

"Biarritz; Limberg wants to be near Monte Carlo."

"Isn't he going to hunt?"

"Not foxes," laughed the old woman with a hard face, "but I was thinking it would be very awkward for a criminal to have that man Rossiter on his track. Oh, of course, I see you don't care to talk about the affair, naturally"—for an impatient shade flitted across her companion's face, and he emptied his champagne glass at a draught.

As the dinner proceeded, wise Mrs. Ponsonby Smith furnished the conversation with an accompaniment in the form of a musical glass obligato, so that her lord and master managed to keep clear of serious danger. It is true he brought a frown to the cadaverous face of Lord Limberg by alluding, in order to demonstrate his familiarity with the family connections of the upper ten, to one or two relatives of his lordship who had happened to figure rather more prominently in the court of bankruptcy, and that presided over by Sir Francis Jeune, than at the Court of St. James', and he caused something like a panic at the table by casually mentioning that he had that afternoon been perusing Stubbs' Gazette and beginning to recapitulate the names of those belonging to the district he had found there. Cling! cling! went Mrs. Ponsonby Smith's glass furiously, as a tripper's restaurant bell; the recapitulation was throttled at birth, and the situation was saved.

But from one theme, not wild horses could drag Mr. Ponsonby Smith; the superlative intrinsic value of his belongings. His 'ouses, his 'orses, his wines, his pictures,

It seemed that the beating of their own hearts would betray their hiding-place.

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he waxed enthusiastic enumerating and describing them, never forgetting to mention, as the unfailing criterion of their merit, what he had paid for them, and frequently, as an instance of sagacity, how much more he had been asked for them. Lord and Lady Limberg and others present exchanged significant glances; the master of Fallowfield Hall listened with rapt attention, which won the heart of his host.

"There's class, Maria, if you like," Mr. Ponsonby Smith remarked at a later stage in the evening. "Why that there old gambler, Lord Limberg, could hardly set an' listen at the dinner table when I was a-talking about the stock of port I'd bricked up in the cellars. But, bless you, that Mr. Roylance, he was all attention, and, after dinner, when you ladies had gone upstairs and Limberg was fidgeting to get to the cards, Mr. Roylance was one of the very first to say 'yes' when I orfered to show 'em the cellars. He was the sort of chap as takes an interest in things, and I like him; and I was jolly glad he did clear old Limberg out when we did sit down at cards."

"So was I, Joseph," replied the lady, "for it's something shocking the tales I've heard about them Limbergs going out to people's houses to dinner and winning every blessed penny the people who asked them was worth. People say they actually make their living at the cards. And how anxious he was to get Mr. Roylance down at that little green table in the ante-room? I heard Mr. Harcourt Dale whisper to him, 'Be careful of Lord Limberg, he's worse than a professional gambler; he's an amateur gambler, and a gentleman by profession.' And Sir George Manders said out loud in the drawing-room: 'Limberg's got a nice fat pigeon; he'll be plucked pretty clean before he's done with him.' And for all Lord Limberg's a nobleman, he looked more like an old hawk as he took young Roylance's arm and led him into the card room; yes, and I saw him look back over his shoulder at that old scarecrow of a wife of his and he winked, and that wink said as plain as A B C: 'Got him!'"

"Yes, my dear," said Mr. Ponsonby Smith; "but he didn't look much like a hawk when he came out, he looked more like a poor barn-door fowl what had been set about by a fighting cock and then chucked into a pond. They say Roylance had most astonishing luck, it's often the way with novices. But, I say, he was quick enough, wasn't he; nobody else except him saw that accident?"

"What accident, Joseph?"

"Why, didn't you see him when they was playing Bridge suddenly stop and say, 'I beg pardon, my lord, you've dropped an ace'; then Limberg swore he'd done nothing of the kind, and the other says, cool as a cucumber and as sure as a gun: 'Oh, yes! really, I saw it fall, look, my lord, on your right knee, it slipped off the table.' And Lord Limberg looks down, and he says: 'Well, I'm sure, so it has. How very careless!'"

So far as the Ponsonby Smiths were concerned, it was a most enjoyable evening. They enjoyed the display of their own abundance, they enjoyed Doris Dale's singing, and the Squire of Fallowfield surprised and charmed everybody when seated at the piano. He filled the room with melody, sometimes classical, sometimes popular, managing to delight everybody, except, perhaps, Lord and Lady Limberg, who were wondering how on earth they were to scrape along minus the hundred and fifty pounds which had been transferred from their pockets to the pianist's, and how on earth Limberg was going to take up the promissory note he had scribbled at the table for another two hundred. And fancy, when Limberg suggested an I.O.U., the Squire of Fallowfield happening to have a bill stamp in his pocket-book!

Remember the Prince of Wales's Hospital Fund, Bank of England, E.C.

For all kinds of gravies,

soups, entrées, hashes, ragoûts, and made dishes, Bovril will be found a splendid addition, while to the clever housewife will be suggested a number of new dishes in which Bovril can be utilised to advantage.

But please remember that there is only one Bovril; that it is called Bovril, and nothing else.

BOVRIL

"VIROL" is recommended for the young by Bovril Ltd.

"It's been a most disappointing evening, Caroline," said Lord Limberg as he threw himself back in a corner of the carriage. "It serves us right for acknowledging and visiting that class of people."

"Oh, but the Ponsonby Smiths would have been all right if we could only have got them to have played."

"But we can't, and I shall cease to know the Ponsonby Smiths; at least I shall if I can raise that fourth mortgage in other quarters."

"But don't be precipitate, Limberg. The man who spoilt our evening, as a matter of fact, was the one most nearly our equal in social standing."

"Yes, by gad! Never saw such luck before! And a mere beginner too!"

As for the Squire of Fallowfield himself, leaning back in his brougham as it sped along the tree-arcaded lanes, its lamps cleaving the inky blackness of the tunnels made by interlacing boughs, he folded his arms, half-closed his eyes, and puffing at his eternal cigar, muttered:

"A fair night's work in one way. Yes, the business part of it was all right, but as for pleasure. Ah! she wouldn't say a word to me except but what etiquette and common politeness demanded, and I couldn't win a smile from her. All the while the other women were looking at me with languishing eyes under drooping lashes, she was still and cold as a statue, thinking of him. Yes, I know, with a canker-worm gnawing at her heart for his sake. But where on earth can the fellow be? He couldn't have played into my hands more completely if he'd been trying, trying as hard as that old harridan Lady Limberg was trying to play up to the hand of her rogue of a husband just now. His disappearance has condemned him: not merely before he's tried, but before he's caught. By Jove! he's clever enough in keeping out of the way; he's slipped Rossiter clean enough as a whistle. What a coincidence if he's been working some little plant of his own—on the cross! Or again, suppose something happened to him, suppose he's been to town for a night or two off and he's got into a mix, say in some place like those I learnt to play Bridge and Baccarat in, and paid for learning; or again, something may have happened to him in his own district.

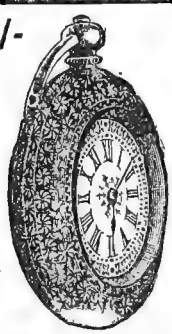
"Now, I wonder if Barney and Josh, working on their own account, have happened to cross him and are keeping it dark from me; they're quite capable of it, they meant carrying out the whole of the Dalehurst contract on their own. I wish—oh! I wish three people I know, two men and a woman, were at the other end of the earth. I'd win Doris, I'd marry and settle down, and there wouldn't be a sleeker and more respectable member of society than Tiger Dick—I mean, Cyril Roylance of Fallowfield Hall.

"Or if only two of them, the two men were away—for she's staunch enough, she wouldn't play my game, but she wouldn't give it away, she's got the pluck to, but she wouldn't; they would, if it paid them, but they daren't. But where on earth can this fellow Branscombe be? Wherever he may be, by Jove! for her sake I'd change places with him and chance it.

"For I love her; by Jove! I love her. I've liked plenty of girls, a thundering sight too many, perhaps, but I never cared for any girl quite in the same way as I care for her. Except, perhaps—once! Long ago. And then I only thought I cared; in this case I'm sure."

The carriage paused a moment at the lodge, the big gates swung open, and then the wheels creaked as they wound along the stately avenue leading to the magnificent, though a trifle sombre, main portal. The doors swung open, the man who ruled there entered, then said, with a nod to the footman who divested him of his sable-lined overcoat:

30/-



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When we send Watch subject to 7 days' trial; if approved you can complete purchase by 9 monthly payments of 3s., or one payment of 27s., when we make you a present of any article to the value of 3s. as discount.

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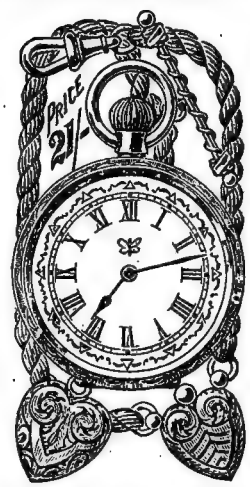
Jewelled Movement carefully adjusted and timed within 4 minutes per month, constructed on improved principles, richly ornamented dial. Gold hands, handsomely engraved Sterling Silver Case.



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Terms: 3s. 6d. deposit with order, and 7 monthly payments of 2s. 6d. The movement of this Watch is built on the most approved lines, to secure great timekeeping accuracy; choicely engraved Silver case. Prince of Wales' Pattern Chain, complete in case.

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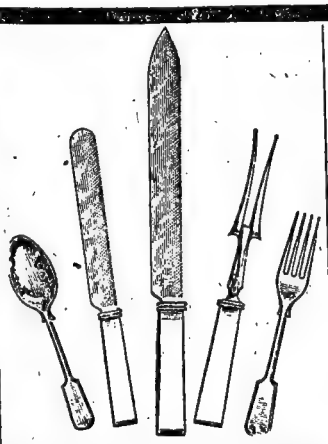

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Each Parcel includes:

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6 Table Forks	6 Dessert Forks
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6 Tea Spoons	6 Egg Spoons
1 Sugar Spoon	1 Sugar Tongs.

Also CARVER & FORK to match.

DON'T BE CONFUSED

by apparently similar parcels extensively advertised by retailers, the knives in which are of inferior workmanship and only bone-handled, and the forks and spoons common white metal. We guarantee every knife in the "Sheffield" Parcel to be of the finest hand-forged Sheffield steel, with xylonite ivory handles, which cannot discolour and the forks and spoons are made of pure nickel.

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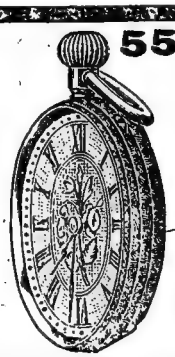

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When we send this Gold Watch for 7 days' trial; if approved you complete purchase by 9 monthly payments of 5s. 6d., or one payment of 49s. 6d., when we present any article value 5s. 6d. as discount.

DESCRIPTION:

Excellent quality, Jewelled Movement, Gold balance, fitted in choicely engraved Solid 14-carat Gold Case, richly ornamented dial with keyless attachment, 55s. Keywind, 50s.; 5s. monthly.

The Public are warned against purchasing cheap Gold Watches, the cases of which are not of sufficient strength to protect movement.

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"Don't let anybody wait up. I want nothing more to-night. Good night, everybody."

Then he sought his palatial bedroom, lit another cigar, filled himself a liqueur from the tantalus, and sat awhile smoking.

Then he went to the door, softly opened it, and listened, reclosed it, kicked off his dress boots; he gave a glance at the bed, the smooth white coverlet and quilt, he undressed, and tumbled into bed. Two or three minutes later, instead of composing himself to sleep, he tumbled up again, flinging aside quilt and coverlet.

"Yes," he said; "in case anybody entered early in the morning I've been to bed and got up early for one of my gallops or walks before breakfast."

Then he went across to an inner dressing-room, where stood a wardrobe, on casters, some inches away from the wall. He had once expressed a doubt as to that wall being damp and conducive to moth.

He pushed it further from the wall, touched a spring, and slid back the secret door of the false back of that wardrobe. Then from within he took a reefer jacket, a fur cap, a pair of corduroy trousers, a pair of thick blucher boots, a belcher neckerchief, a close cropped wig, while he fitted on a bull's eye acetylene lamp, a revolver, a short leather-laced stick with a loaded knob attached by gutta percha! Pulling the cap well over his eyes, he stealthily made his way back to the bedroom, switched off the light, then stealthily emerged into the silent corridor. At the end of it he gently raised a window opening on to the gardens of the east wing, made his way across these to the fields, and so to a lane, where in the dense shadow of the overhanging trees the identical trap with, between its shafts, the identical fast trotting pony with muffled shoes which had waited close to the Abbey Farm in the early morning following the midnight murder at Dalehurst Grange was standing.

"That you, Barney?"

"Right ho, that you, Dick?" came an answering whisper.

He clambered into the trap, and silently, swiftly, it sped away towards Brettelby Court.

Silently, steadily the midnight hours crept away. Once, twice the turret clock in the stable yard at Fallowfield Hall mentioned the fact that Time was still toiling on his journey whoever else might be resting. Stealthily along the oak wainscotted and floored gallery a man's form crept in the darkness that was quivering on the very point of beginning to lift. He approached a window.

"Yes," he said, "I'd best leave this one open, this is one they might get in by. And what infernal carelessness; it's unlatched, and how smooth it moves." Then the strange figure made its way up a staircase along the corridor to the Squire's bedroom.

"He's going into accounts to-morrow is he?" the prowling man muttered, "Very well, I'll settle accounts to-night. Cyril Roylance, you'll almost wish you'd stayed beyond the seas; you won't quite wish, because you'll be past wishing."

He placed one hand on the door handle, gently, noiselessly turned the latch, and entered.

* * * * * *

Meantime, another form approached that window—from outside!

"What? The deuce! Was I fool enough to leave it open?" A sudden spring, he was kneeling on the sill, another second he had dropped noiselessly into the corridor. Stealthily he made his way along the corridor, into which, through the mullioned windows, the thin grey-blue shaft of light was piercing.

"It's a bit late," he muttered. "I hardly fancied the job would have taken so long." He reached that bedroom door, then gave a start.

ENGLAND'S DANGER.

A HULL SOLDIER'S STATEMENT.

George Henry Biggins, of 5 Grange Villas, Grange Street, Hull, served under Sir Charles Warren in South Africa, and was nine months in Mafeking. Some hard campaigning fell to his lot, and though he bears no scar of the battlefield, misfortunes have come to him in another shape. An *Eastern Morning News* reporter who called upon him the other day was certainly able to observe in him nothing but a fine healthy type of the British soldier, yet Mr. Biggins owes his present healthy condition exclusively to Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness, and he has not always looked as well as he does to-day. "I have known the time," he said, "when I used to be strangely overcome by a chilly sensation. It was not altogether cold, for I felt it all over my body; and it seemed to be the result of being altogether run down. I felt languid and too weary and weak to do anything. My joints ached as if I had rheumatism all over me, and many a time I had difficulty in keeping up with my duties. I began to suffer from biliousness, too, and to experience a nasty sharp pain at my heart. This pain continued to get worse. Whenever I moved quickly it commenced, and I had to go slowly to get ease. So bad did it become at last that I felt convinced I had heart disease. Of course I tried to get relief, and purchased all kinds of medicines in vain until I tried Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness. The result was most satisfactory. I noticed an improvement after the first few doses, and so went on taking them. They soon ended the biliousness, and from first commencing to take them I have never again felt the pain in the chest. Bile Beans have completely cured me, and I am frequently recommending them to persons I find suffering as I did. While at Gosport I gave some to a gunner, and his mother-in-law derived great benefit from them. Only the other night my little daughter was quite out of sorts, and I gave her a few half beans. The next day she was all right again. I can tell you my family, both young and old, have used them with marvellous results." Wherever Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness are used marvellous results follow. For indigestion, anæmia, dizziness, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, debility, headache, nervousness, female ailments, colds, chill, rheumatism, and as a preventitive of influenza they are unequalled. Purely vegetable in composition, their use is followed not merely by temporary improvement, but by permanent cure. Of all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, E.C., by sending prices—1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. They have been instrumental in restoring scores of our gallant defenders, as they did Private Biggins.

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The gathering light stealing between the chinks of the blinds fell upon the face of Morgan Chandler.

"Why! what's this? I'll swear I never left that open too!" He entered the door, heard a shuffle, a stealthy footstep, saw in the dim first streak of dawn the figure of a man step by step advancing across the room towards the bed; the gathering light stealing between the chink of the blinds fell upon the face, the face of—Morgan Chandler.

And it fell and glistened on something else; on the barrel and cylinder of a revolver! Swiftly, but silently, the second form sprang upon the first, a strong arm was hooked across Morgan Chandler's throat, a resistless knee pressed into his spine. He went down with a gasp; crash! came something full upon his skull. He half-uttered a cry that died into a gurgle as a pair of iron hands tightened the collar at his throat; crash came something down again, and Morgan Chandler fell back and lay face upwards there upon the floor.

Swiftly, silently, but deftly and coolly, within that dressing-room the master of Fallowfield Hall divested himself of his disguise, replacing it within the trick back of that ingeniously constructed wardrobe. Then he tumbled into a suit of pyjamas; for a moment he looked down on the heap huddled up there by the dressing table.

"He's right for an hour or two, anyway," he soliloquised. "I may as well, however, take this out of harm's way in case of accident," and gliding back to the inner room he placed the revolver inside the false back of the wardrobe. Then he timed a tiny alarm just an hour ahead, crept into bed, composed himself comfortably between the sheets, and dropped off quietly and comfortably to sleep.

(To be continued.)

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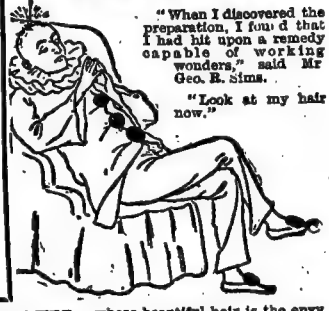

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, November 18th. Post-cards only, please. The prize of £1 1s. for the best storyette published this week has been won by Mr. H. A. Moore, 18 Athol Street, Hulme, Manchester, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

"THIS age demands men who have convictions," shouted the impassioned orator. "Where shall we find them?" "In prison," replied the man in the gallery.

TEACHER (taking the class in English history): "Now, William Johnson, what happened on the Fifth of November?" William (readily): "Please, sir, our Henry got his finger blown off, and dad singed off all his whiskers."

A GENTLEMAN one day took his little lad out for a walk, but the boy, from some cause or other, got lost, and, meeting a policeman, tearfully asked: "Please, sir, have you seen a man without a little boy? 'Cause if you have, I's that little boy."

MISTRESS: "Why is dinner not ready, Bridget? Didn't I tell you to cook it with the gas stove?" Bridget: "Plaze, mum, yis, and I did thry, but th' stove wint out." Mistress: "Why didn't you light it again after it went out?" Bridget: "Yis, mum; but it's not come back yit. It wint out t'rough the roof."

LADY VISITOR (to little girl): "What became of that little kitten you had here once?" Little Girl: "Why, haven't you heard?" Lady Visitor: "No! was it drowned?" Little Girl: "No!" Lady Visitor: "Lost?" Little Girl: "No!" Lady Visitor: "Poisoned?" Little Girl: "No!" Lady Visitor: "Then whatever became of it?" Little Girl: "It growed up into a cat."

A NATIVE of the green isle of Erin called at a chemist's shop the other day with a prescription, the putting up of which he watched with great curiosity. "What's that, ony way?" asked the customer. "This," said the obliging apothecary, "is tincture cemicitaga racemosa and liniment of saponis, cantharides, and opii." A look of bewilderment changed to one of grave concern as the Irishman inquired: "And what is the price?" "Sixpence," was the reply. "Be jabers," said Pat, "I thought two such names as that would cost me at least five shillings."

*A WORTHY doctor, while enjoying a holiday last summer in the island of Arran, took the opportunity, along with a friend, to go whiting fishing. During operations the doctor's sinker came off and was lost. Here was a dilemma—no sinker, no more fishing that day. Ha! happy thought—his flask—no sooner said than done. The bottle was filled with salt water, carefully corked, and sent down on its mission. After a few minutes' interval, "Ha!" quoth the doctor, "a bite!" and up he pulls at racing speed a fine pair of whitings, one on each hook. His companion exclaimed. "Ha, doctor, twins this time!" "Yes," quoth the doctor, "and brought up on the bottle, too."

JONES: "Ah, no! I'm not opposed to women riding bicycles. There are some I would like to see give all their spare time to it." Mrs. Jones: "Who are they?" Jones: "Well, for instance, the young ladies in this neighbourhood who are learning to play the piano."

HUSBAND: "Do you know the reason that Shamrock II. did not win the race?" Wife: "No! Why?" Husband: "Because the Yankees put something into the water to prevent her winning." Wife: "What a shame! Wasn't it found out? What did they put in—oil?" Husband: "No, the Columbia."

AN Irishman in Dublin, happening to break a shop-window, immediately fled. The proprietor of the shop, seeing him running, ran after him, and, after a long chase, managed to catch him. "Are you the fellow who broke my window?" he asked. "Yes," replied the Irishman, "and wasn't I just after running home to get the money to pay for it?"

IT happened in the drawing-room of a boarding-house. He was a young dentist and she a school teacher, but hardly young. "I have made up my mind to speak to you to-night," he said in a low voice. She blushed, looked at the faded tulip in the carpet, and was dumb. "I have established myself in my profession, I have a little money laid by, and I have made up my mind to get married." More blushes and more silence on the part of the maiden. "I am going to ask you——" He hesitated. She moved nearer to him. "I am going to ask you if you know any young girl whom you think would make me a good wife." She stopped blushing, chilled him with a look, and swept out of the room.

IT was a cold, dark night, but Sandy and William were happy, because there sat between them the most charming young lady in Farsley. It was a spirited horse they had hired, and the trap bowled merrily along o'er moor and fell. William held the reins, and as he could dimly perceive, in spite of the darkness, that his side of the lady's muff was unoccupied, he slipped his own disengaged hand into it, and—well, two hands were very soon tenderly pressing each other. And so the happy moments flew, and the drive home came almost to an end. "When you gentlemen have done with my muff," said the young lady presently, "I trust you will not fear to tell me, as my own hands are becoming quite numb with the cold." Then dark suspicion fell upon her two admirers, for things are not always what they seem. And William and Sandy are now sworn enemies.

HIS history is briefly told. After several days of thought he discovered a sure way of making money, and, like other men, he was in a hurry to try it. He made haste to insert the following in several country weeklies: "Sure way to kill the potato beetle. Send twelve stamps without delay to X. Y. Z., who will send a recipe that cannot fail." Then he hired a dray to bring his letters from the post-office and had 50,000 of his recipes printed. Within two weeks something like 46,000 or 47,000 farmers had contributed their stamps for the printed recipes. By-and-by several hundred of them bought stout cudgels and railway tickets and started out to interview the advertiser. At his office they were informed that he had left to attend to important business abroad and was not expected back. All he had left was a package of 3,000 or 4,000 slips of paper on which was printed the following: "Put the beetle on a flat stone, and then hit him with another."

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

A Half-guinea Fountain Pen will each week be awarded to the reader who is the sender of the most interesting query answered on this page.

THREE people, especially, will now be sorry that they did not buy the copy of *Short Stories* dated October 26th, as they have thereby lost their chance of each winning a five-pound note. To prevent further disappointments, see that your friends all purchase this and succeeding numbers, so that if their portraits do appear they may be able to send their claims in before the time limit expires.

❦❦❦

THE two claimants of the five-pound notes this week are:

MR. STANTON WRIGHT (No. 21),
1A Hilton Villas,
Champion Crescent,
Sydenham, S.E.

MR. JAMES CATES (No. 23),
28 Esplanade,
Scarborough.

❦❦❦

I SHOULD like to draw your attention to the fact that I am now offering a Half-guinea Fountain Pen to the reader who sends in the letter containing the best query which is answered on this page each week. Remember that it is not for one week only that this offer holds good, but for every week, so that many of you will have the chance of winning one of these pens, which, nowadays, are almost a necessity to everyday life. While I am on the subject, I might as well add that I shall always be glad to receive letters from my readers, whether they contain queries or not.

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ADVICE TO READERS ON VARIOUS MATTERS.

(Replies to Correspondents.)

"BELLA."—I should say that the cathedral of Antwerp holds the record for a peal of bells. It consists of no fewer than ninety bells. Elaborate chimes are rung upon them every half-hour. As you are fond of calculations, try to work out the time required to ring the complete changes on such a peal of bells, at the rate of two sounds a second. It will, perhaps, assist you to know that with a peal of twelve bells the time required would be ninety-one years.

"How is it," writes "E. M. P.," "that one seldom sees a sketch of an African scene without it being embellished with palm trees? Now I have travelled very widely in Africa, and have come across vast tracts of country not only innocent of palm trees, but destitute of every sort of vegetation. It seems to me there must be some reason for this peculiarity, besides the crass ignorance of those who make the sketches."

There is certainly a reason, and a very good one. It is entirely the fault of the public. Readers of illustrated papers are convinced in their minds that no African scene is complete without palm trees, and palm trees they will have. I remember an incident in which Sir Francis Grenfell once sent a sketch from the seat of war in Africa to a London illustrated paper. The scene of the battle was a part of the country absolutely destitute of trees. Imagine his astonishment when at length a copy of the journal came into his hands to find that here, there, and everywhere, all over his illustration were stuck palm trees. On writing to the editor to protest, he was informed that unless this particular sort of tree were included in the sketch, the public would believe the whole thing to be a fake and drawn somewhere in the office by an ignoramus.

"FLORIST" wishes to know if there is any way of preserving the green of plant leaves when it is desired that they should remain a long time on exhibition.

I believe that an official of the United States Department of Agriculture has discovered such a method, but it is somewhat complicated and costly. He combines the chlorophyll in the leaves of the plant with copper, in the form of acetate or sulphate, producing a copper phyllocyanide which is insoluble in almost everything except strong alcohol, is not destroyed by light, and gives a colour hardly to be detected from the natural green. The process is, unfortunately, too difficult for anyone who has not a chemical laboratory at his disposal to undertake with any hope of success.

"X. Y. Z." has observed for several years past that it is always colder on Monday morning than on any other day of the week. He wants to know whether I have noticed the same thing.

I confess I haven't. Probably the reason is that "X. Y. Z." does not take any exercise during the week-end, and eats more than he does during the week. If so, his circulation would be in a lower state than usual, and he would feel any cold air there may be about on Monday more readily than on any other morning.

"POPPY" asks: "Which is it correct to serve first at table, gentlemen visitors or lady members of the family?"

Unquestionably, the lady members of the family, except when the hostess herself is serving at the foot of the table, when it would be obviously irregular for her to serve herself before the male guests.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I AM open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 6,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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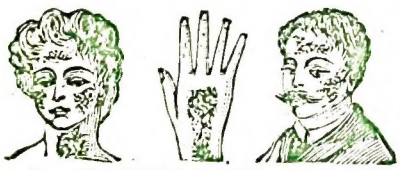

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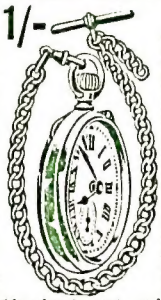

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